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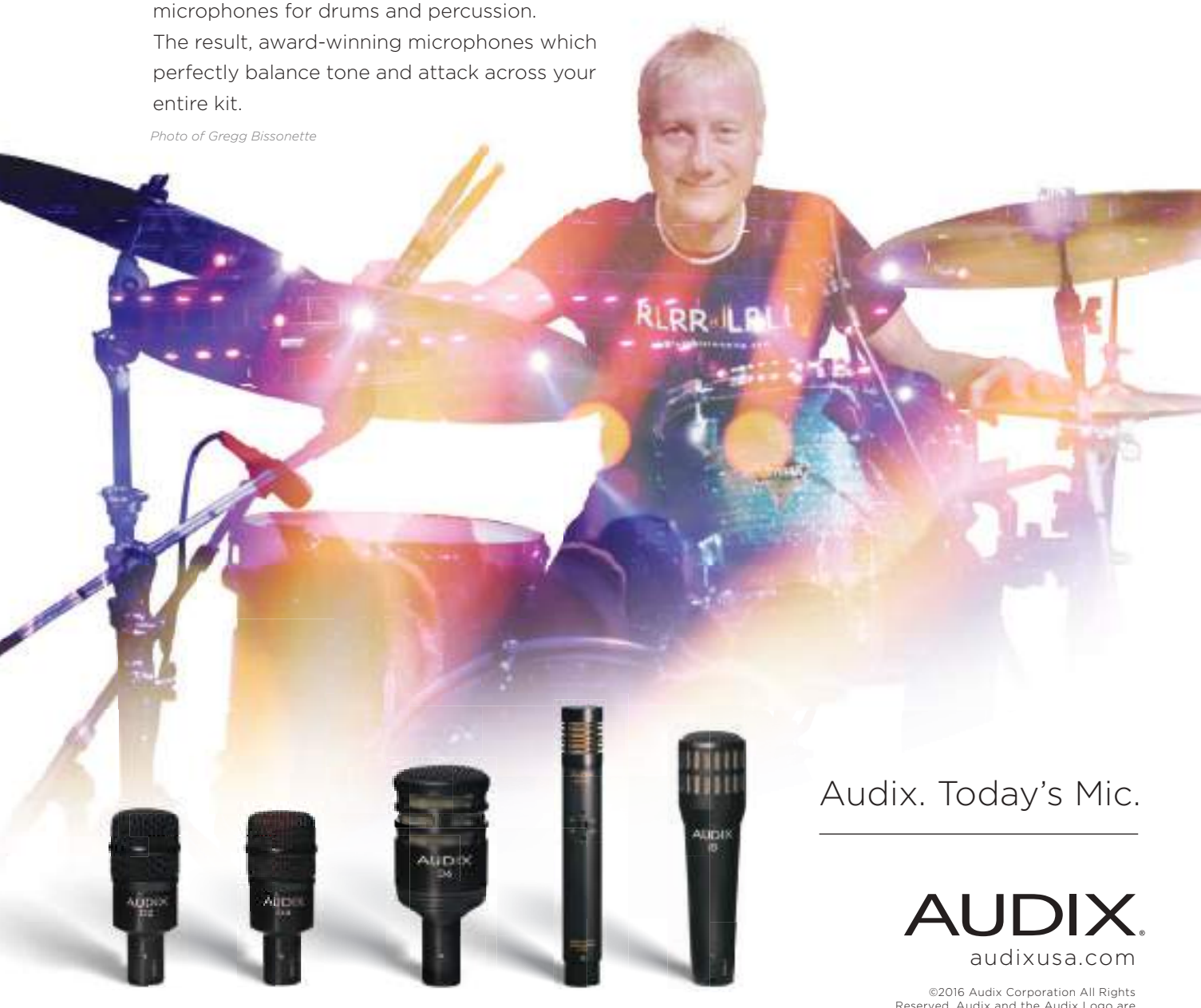

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CONTENTS

Volume 41 • Number 3
Cover and Contents photos by Alex Solca

On the Cover

34 Kenny Aronoff

"This book got me to do some serious reflecting. But it's not a memoir. This is what I'm continuing to do."

He reached the top by knowing exactly what he was capable of as a modern professional drummer, and by working tirelessly to fulfill the responsibilities of the job. by Billy Amendola

FEATURES

28 DAVE WECKL. When Chick Corea came a-calling in the '80s, the then-rising star effectively arrived. These days the drummer's getting to relive those heady times. by Mike Haid

30 GEORGE THOROGOOD AND THE DESTROYERS' JEFF SIMON. The veteran band and its still-energized founding drummer have done more than most to bring the blues to the masses. by Bob Girouard

32 MIKE PORTNOY. His gargantuan performance on the new concept album by Neal Morse had us wondering about all the classic double LPs lining his own shelves. by Ilya Stemkovsky

48 OPETH'S MARTIN AXENROT. The fascinating evolution of the exploratory Swedish metal band is driven by a classic-rock lover's cinematic rhythmic visions. by Mike Haid

54 GREAT '80S DRUM PERFORMANCES, PART 2: JAZZ AND FUSION. It wasn't *all* about spiky beats and quirky singers in the MTV era. Instrumental music was going strong—and launching drum heroes we still bow down to today. by Ilya Stemkovsky

62 DARYL HALL AND JOHN OATES' BRIAN DUNNE. Talk about a high-stakes gig: backing one music legend after another on a weekly national TV show—when you're not touring with Hall and Oates. Not that this veteran player takes any of his good fortune for granted. by Bob Campbell

68 RAT SCABIES. Few have cut as lasting an impression as the original drummer with the Damned. And though his twenty-year membership in the British group has long since ended, he's still at it—and still a hero to drummers, especially those of the punk persuasion. by Jon Wurster

LESSONS

74 Basics
Stickings That Rock
Part 1: From a Hand Pattern to a Groove
by Rich Redmond

76 Rock 'n' Jazz Clinic
Twelve Essential Shuffles
Some of Drumming's Most Influential Feels
by Rich Scannella

78 Jazz Drummer's Workshop
Beyond the Noteheads
Benefits and Strategies for Transcribing, Part 2
by Steve Fidyk

82 Strictly Technique
1,000 Ways to Practice a Single Page
Part 1: Introducing the Method
by Libor Hadrava

84 Rock Perspectives
Five and Seven Over Two
Exploring Odd Polyrhythms
by Aaron Edgar

88 Concepts
Conquering Life's Stage Fright
Part 1: The Three C's
by Mark Schulman

EQUIPMENT

16 Product Close-Up
Ddrum Max Series Drumset
Dream Paper-Thin Crashes, TriHats, and Libor Hadrava Stacks
Noble & Cooley SS Classic, Horizon, and Walnut Snare Drums
DW Bass Drum Beaters
CooperGroove GrooveGrip Performance Drumsticks

24 Electronic Insights
6 More Mobile Apps Every Drummer Should Know
by Miguel Monroy

72 Gearing Up
Carrie Underwood's Garrett Goodwin

90 New and Notable

Last chance to win a DW Design series setup worth more than $9,600! Page 80

DEPARTMENTS

8 An Editor's Overview
The Uncommon Man
by Billy Amendola

10 Readers' Platform
Favorite '80s Jazz or Fusion Drum Track?

12 News
Out Now: AFI's Adam Carson and the Kinks' Mick Avory, Yes's Alan White and Dawes' Griffin Goldsmith On Tour, and more

92 Showcase
featuring Drum Market

95 Retailer Profile
Beat It Music

96 Critique
A live Dizzy Gillespie album featuring Philly Joe Jones, a pair of new Eric Harland recordings, and more

100 Backbeats
Rich Redmond's Fourth Annual Nashville Drummer's Weekend, KHS America's Drum Day in Nashville

103 Kit of the Month
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AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

The Uncommon Man

Hello, everyone! We're already well into the new year, and I always like to take the opportunity around this time to thank readers, drum industry members, and everyone else who has supported *Modern Drummer* over the past forty-one years. Some of you will be picking up this issue at the winter National Association of Music Merchants show, the enormous gathering of dealers, manufacturer reps, and artists that takes place in Anaheim, California, each year. I'll be at NAMM with my fellow *MD* staffers Mike Dawson and Miguel Monroy, and we're all excited to check out some new gear and to thank some of you personally for your support.

This month's cover artist, Kenny Aronoff, is no stranger to *Modern Drummer* readers. Like so many of you, I've held him in high regard for many years, and I was excited to conduct our latest interview with him. I've been fortunate to witness Kenny laying down his magic in the recording studio firsthand; he's a perfectionist, he's always prepared for anything, and he's utterly unique, traits that have helped keep him at the very top of his game for decades.

After a few short minutes of being in the studio with Kenny, who recently released his autobiography, *Sex, Drums, Rock 'n' Roll!*, you understand why everyone wants to work with him. "I hire Kenny because I want him in the room with me when I'm making a record," famed producer and Blue Note Records president Don Was says in the book. "He saves my sessions."

"The way he hit his snare drum was above and beyond anyone [else]," singer-songwriter Melissa Etheridge says. "You knew it was him. His sound was the sound of the late '80s and '90s."

"Kenny always plays the drums like he's excited." That's how Creedence Clearwater Revival leader and frequent Aronoff employer John Fogerty puts it. "He's like a kid when [he's] discovering a new drum part he wants to try. He's excited, and it's a contagious thing. I'm an excitable boy myself."

To get a broad perspective on Kenny for his latest *MD* profile, I spoke to his family and peers. "Kenny is married to his career," his wife, Gina (a kick-ass drummer herself), told me. "It's always come first. He travels a lot, and even when he's home he's always working. He's very motivated and positive, which definitely affects the way I approach my own life and career. His schedule is *so* full, and it changes daily. But we have an amazing life that's filled with lots of love and with opportunities that most people don't have."

"I was very fortunate to get to hang and learn from Kenny back in the early '80s, in Bloomington, Indiana," session drummer and former Aronoff student Shawn Pelton tells *MD*. "MTV was just starting out, and Kenny's big sound, deep pocket, and hard-hitting approach were all over the airwaves with the John Mellencamp hits of that time. It was incredibly exciting to get to see him play local gigs as well as the big arena shows. Kenny was always so open, generous, and giving. Words can't express how much I learned from him, on so many different levels, and how that has helped me survive as a drummer in this crazy business. He is truly the best, and he'll always be a deep source of inspiration to me, with his huge heart and a kick-ass pocket."

Besides Kenny's piece, be sure to read our interviews with Hall and Oates drummer Brian Dunne, fan faves Mike Portnoy and Dave Weckl, and more. As usual, there's a great deal to be learned. Enjoy the issue.

Billy Amendola
Editor at Large

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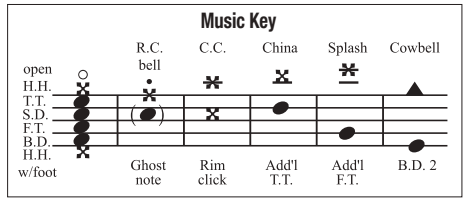

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Dropped Beat

Thanks for the great cover story on Berklee College of Music faculty member Ralph Peterson [December 2016]. I'm writing to point out one correction, however. The article states that Ralph was the only "person to share the bandstand as co-drummer with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers." In fact, I was the second drummer in the Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers Big Band in 1980, with a debut at the Bottom Line in New York City and a subsequent summer tour of Europe for about six weeks. The tour covered nearly every country in Europe, with live recording dates at the Montreux Festival in Switzerland and the North Sea Festival in Holland. This tour was before Ralph ever played with Art. Subsequently, I went on to become Art's road manager for more than two years, which was what enabled me to write my first book, *Art Blakey's Jazz Messages*.

John Ramsay
Chair, Percussion Department
Berklee College of Music

This month we're continuing our series on great 1980s drumming tracks by taking a look at standout jazz and fusion performances from the era. We asked our social-media followers for their personal favorites, and here are some of their comments.

When I think of '80s jazz fusion, the first drummer who comes to mind is Dave Weckl. He was a game changer with his sounds, technique, and precision. I love his solo work and his recordings with the Chick Corea Elektric Band. Another monster fusion album from this era is Allan Holdsworth's *Secrets* with Vinnie Colaiuta on the drums.
Anthony Dio

Omar Hakim on "Fortress Around Your Heart" from Sting's first solo album, *The Dream of the Blue Turtles*. [The album] received rock/pop performance accolades and awards, but this song's melodic structure, expansive chord patterns, and haunting sax improvisations from Branford Marsalis betray the idea of this being a rock track. Hakim performs a clinic on form, variation, and improvisation in a song where the raison d'être is not to show the virtuosity of its players but to tell the brilliantly written story about a once possessive love affair that's reached its [end]. His ride cymbal entrance into the intro, followed by the bass drum and snare rimshots as the verse begins, prepare us for the crescendo into a richly engaging chorus. [Hakim opens] up the drums to engage with the vivid imagery of the lyrics. The tom accents provide a nice counterpoint to the song's steady drive. The sequence is repeated in the second verse and chorus, and then in the outro Hakim reprises the intro while adding variation with the ride cymbal and bass drum. It's a magnificent use of the drumset on a tremendous song with an all-star band that features one of the most cerebral lyricists of our time singing a life story in five minutes. "Then let me build a bridge, for I cannot fill the chasm, and let me set the battlements on fire."
Clive Mullings

As a young drummer who was heavily into rock—but willing to venture into fusion—the two big albums of the '80s for me were *Light Years* by the Chick Corea Elektric Band with Dave Weckl, and Steve Smith's first Vital Information album.
Dave Ferris

Simon Phillips' EP *Protocol*, Allan Holdsworth's *Metal Fatigue* with Chad Wackerman and Gary Husband, and Holdsworth's *Atavachron* with Wackerman, Husband, and Tony Williams, who played on one track. And the self-titled album by the Australian fusion band Pyramid with David Jones on drums.
Michael Beale

"Trance Dance" from the Chick Corea Elektric Band's *Eye of the Beholder* album, with Dave Weckl on drums. To this day it's one of my favorite albums from the group, and it inspires me to push myself.
Oskar Garcia

Steve Jordan on "Pick Hits" from John Scofied's *Electric Outlet* album. It has an amazing groove, and there's no overplaying.
Pat Illingworth

Renaissance by Branford Marsalis with Tony Williams, *Diamond in the Rough* by Roy Hargrove with Ralph Peterson Jr., and *Black Codes (From the Underground)* by Wynton Marsalis with Jeff "Tain" Watts. All of these albums were progressive and had a pocket while stretching the boundaries of music, and they helped me elevate my playing.
Stacey Lamont Sydnor

If I had to pick a favorite fusion performance from the '80s, I'd say it's "D Flat Waltz" from Weather Report's *Domino Theory*. Omar Hakim nailed that one.
Jason Marsalis

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NEWS

Out Now

Adam Carson /// AFI's *The Blood Album*

This past January 20, the anthemic emo-punk band AFI released its self-titled album, aka *The Blood Album*. Drummer Adam Carson, who's been with AFI since its start, propels each song with massive drum tones on the group's tenth studio effort in twenty-five-plus years. According to Carson, around thirty snares, two mix-and-match kits made from DW, Gretsch, and Premier drums, and a slew of production techniques were used while recording the album. "Getting a big, slamming drum tone always starts with the drums in the room tuned properly and sounding great," he explains. "Beyond that, you can use room compression to make things more overdriven. It's a bit of a balancing act, however, because while the snare and toms sound more exciting with some compression, the cymbals can begin to wash everything out and become unruly."

Carson says every song on the record seemed to call for a different combination of close, overhead, and room mics. "A few songs had to be tracked 'top and bottom,'" he adds, "where I would do a pass with just kick, snare, and toms with the room dialed in to explode, and then another pass where I just played the metal. It's a bit confusing to only track the cymbals, especially during fills, and it takes a lot of restraint to not embellish and end up with a bunch of parts that would take three arms to reproduce live. But if done properly, you end up with a great drum sound." **Willie Rose**

More New Releases

The Flaming Lips Oczy Mlody (Steven Drozd) /// **Cate Le Bon** Rock Pool (Stella Mozgawa) /// **Joan of Arc** He's Got the Whole This Land Is Your Land in His Hands (Theo Katsaounis) /// **Chasing Safety** Nomad (Luke Chizek) /// **Dropkick Murphys** 11 Short Stories of Pain & Glory (Matt Kelly) /// **Deaf Havana** All These Countless Nights (Tom Ogden) /// **Susto** & I'm Fine Today (Marshall Hudson) /// **The Regrettes** Feel Your Feelings, Fool! (Maxx Morando) /// **Mark Eitzel** Hey Mr. Ferryman (Mako Sakamoto) /// **Bash & Pop** Anything Could Happen (Frank Ferrer, Joe Sirois) /// **Lo-Pan** In Tensions (Jesse Bartz)

Mick Avory /// The Kinks' *Mono Collection*

This past December, the iconic British Invasion group the Kinks released *The Mono Collection*, a vinyl box set comprising eight of the band's records originally released in stereo between 1964 and 1969, plus a double-LP compilation and a hardcover book. "I do think that the mono recordings sound more natural, as that was the way they were recorded," longtime Kinks drummer **Mick Avory** says. "The mock stereo never really works, as the sounds are separated in two, and you can hear the vocals coming out of one side and not the other."

Although Avory joined the Kinks in 1964, shortly after the band formed, he ceded recording duties on some mid-'60s sessions to studio drummers such as **Bobby Graham** and **Clem Cattini**. "When I joined the Kinks, they were already using Bobby Graham on their recordings," Avory says. "My style was a bit jazzy and quiet, so [producer] Shel Talmy used Bobby on more of the solid tracks and me on the lighter ones. Bobby and Clem were fine to work with. They understood I was a bit green as far as working in the studio was concerned. And Shel Talmy had his own style of recording in which he had all of the recording levels in the red part of the meter, which worked well with the louder tracks." **Willie Rose**

On Tour

Jerry & Lois Photography

ALAN WHITE WITH YES

British drumming great Alan White is celebrating forty-four years with the progressive pioneers Yes as the band embarks on a series of 2017 dates, including a February stint for the seafaring prog-rock festival Cruise to the Edge. During the trip the band is performing tracks from its epic 1973 album, *Tales From Topographic Oceans*; the entire 1980 *Drama* LP; and several other band classics.

Drummer Jay Schellen filled in with the group on its 2016 Japanese tour as White recovered from back surgery. "On the recent Japan tour, I played the second half of the show just to ease back into it," White says. "The recovery is mainly a walking issue. Once I sit down at the drums, it doesn't seem to affect me much at all."

Considering Yes's storied history of member changes, White feels right at home with the present lineup of guitarist Steve Howe, singer Jon Davison, bassist Billy Sherwood (switching from his regular role of guitarist following original bassist Chris Squire's passing), and keyboardist Geoff Downes. "The current lineup of players are all well-versed in Yes music, so it feels very natural to me," White says. The band is playing a few dates around the cruise in February and then touring for another five to six weeks during the summer.

In other news, Yes has been nominated for induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame for the third time. "It seems a very political thing to get into the Hall of Fame," White says. "There seems to be one or two people that control the whole thing. But it doesn't really matter. It's all about the music. The longevity speaks for itself. Progressive music is still quite mysterious, and many musicians come to see the band to discover the origin of this genre." **Mike Haid**

GRIFFIN GOLDSMITH WITH DAWES

Q&A

More with Adam Carson and Griffin Goldsmith at **moderndrummer.com**

The Los Angeles–based indie folk-rock band Dawes is currently in the midst of a fifty-date U.S. tour in support of its latest record, *We're All Gonna Die*, with shows booked through early May. Live, Griffin Goldsmith stays true to the record's deep pocket and solid, unwavering grooves, recalling the work of key influences such as Bernard Purdie and Al Jackson. But as tour cycles continue, the band starts to stretch. "When we first embark on a tour," the drummer explains, "the material, as it's represented on the record, is all still fresh in our minds. The parts that we play live reflect that. They are very close to and sometimes exactly the parts that were played on the record. But there are moments when we stretch and embellish. It's as if every arrangement has a basic skeleton and we can fill it in as we please."

Goldsmith says that the band members often employ musical cues that lead them into and out of certain sections. "But as time passes and we get comfortable playing the new songs," he adds, "the parts and arrangements imperceptibly change. I've recently gone back and listened to certain recordings of ours, and it's interesting how far away we've strayed from certain aspects of the records. But I think that's healthy. A song really gets a chance to live on stage." **Willie Rose**

Also on the Road

Yesod Williams with Pepper
Vinnie Fiorello with Less Than Jake
Raeph Glicken with Black Anvil
Justin Van Westbroek with Guttermouth
Mike Belitsky with the Sadies

Robert Paiste Passes

This past November, the European cymbal manufacturer Paiste announced the passing of a pillar of the family-owned and -operated company, Robert Paiste. According to a statement at paiste.com, Robert shaped the brand in significant ways for several decades, particularly in terms of the development and production of cymbals and gongs, including the Formula 602, 2002, and Signature series.

The following quote, released by the company, encapsulates Robert Paiste's vision: "Sound is vibration, and vibration is energy. Life energy is vibration and sound, also. So, for us, sound is part of a very deep, basic truth. We are not the only ones who feel like this. There are so many musical-minded drummers who get the same exciting feeling from playing their cymbals. It's not just the sound. It's the vibration, the touch, how it feels, and how it speaks to the drummer. It's a wonderful feeling to produce something, hand it over to the drummers, and see them get the same response. There's a deep truth behind it."

Robert Paiste was born in the family's country of origin, Estonia. The disruptions during the mid-twentieth century brought the family through Poland to northern Germany, where in the late 1940s Robert joined his father, Michail, in cymbal and gong production. Robert moved to Switzerland in 1957 to found the company's new (and current) home base, and together with his brother Toomas went on to lead Paiste throughout the second half of the twentieth century.

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Ddrum

Max Series Drumset

Leave your gaff tape at home! These alder/maple drums have a big, articulate, and controlled sound right out of the box.

Originally a Swedish electronics company, ddrum began offering acoustic drumsets after being purchased by Florida-based Armadillo Enterprises in 2005. Some of ddrum's acoustic drum innovations include the first all-ash shell and the more recent all-alder shell.

We reviewed an all-adler Reflex Rally Sport kit in the August 2016 issue and were impressed by the fat, controlled tone it provided. The company also offers drums with a blended alder/maple shell, called the Max series, which we have for review here. Let's take a look.

The Components

The Max series is available in two three-piece shell packs, in either Piano Black or Satin Natural finish. The Max 322, which is what we have for review, comes with an 8x12 rack tom, a 14x16 floor tom, and an 18x22 bass drum. The second shell pack, the 324, also features an 8x12 rack tom and a 14x16 floor tom, but with a traditionally sized 14x24 bass drum. Both shell packs sell for $999.

Add-on Max series toms can be purchased separately and are available in 7x8, 7x10, 9x13, 14x14, and 16x18 sizes. Two matching snares are offered, in 5x14 and 6.5x14 sizes. And there's a limited-edition five-piece Max configuration in Purple Sparkle Burst that includes 7x10 and 8x12 rack toms, 13x14 and 14x16 floor toms, and a super-deep 20x22 bass drum. It sells for $1,299.

Max series tom shells are 6-ply (two plies of maple and four plies of alder), and the bass drums are 8-ply (two maple and six alder).

The bearing edges are cut to 45 degrees on the inside and 30 degrees on the outside. The black nickel–plated hardware includes solid-brass mini-tube lugs, 2.3mm triple-flange hoops, ddrum's Fixtpitch suspension mount, heavy-duty spurs with retractable spikes, and rubber-tip floor tom legs. The bass drum comes with matching Piano Black wood hoops and the company's Resolift, which comprises a round rubber insulator mounted to the bottom side of the shell so that the drum is elevated off the floor by about 1" to help increase sustain and low end.

Our review kit came with U.S.-made Evans drumheads, including Clear G2 tom batters with Clear G1 bottoms, and a Clear EMAD kick batter with a matte-black EMAD front featuring a small porthole and a white ddrum logo.

The Sound

Maple is the most commonly used timber in drum making because of its evenly balanced frequency response and open sustain. Alder has a much darker, warmer, and more focused tonality. Pairing the two woods together creates an interesting drum sound that maintains the big, reverberant note associated with maple, but with the excellent clarity, attack, and super-quick decay provided by alder. No matter how I had these Max series drums tuned, from cranked to wrinkled, or how fast I played, every note had crystal-clear articulation plus a big, fat tone. I was a bit concerned that the 18"-deep bass drum would be a bit difficult to get to speak, but it had superlative attack, almost like what you would get from using a wooden beater.

Tuned super-high, the Max toms crack like popcorn without sounding choked, and medium tunings are about as studio-ready as you can get, producing a full, round tone with a quick decay that required no gates or muffling to mitigate sympathetic hum. Super-low tunings had tons of smack with a very short but full sustain. The floor toms, especially the mammoth 18", become like mini-kick drums at lower tunings, which served well for articulating seamless, quick tom/kick licks.

Microphones responded well to the Max kit. The kick had great punch, click, and low-end heft and no troubling low-end rumble. The toms hit quickly and got out of the way even quicker, which would make them a breeze for sound engineers to get dialed in. The super-short sustain of these drums may be a bit off-putting for players who prefer to milk the most out of every tom hit, but for anyone playing styles of music that require ultimate snap and control, while still desiring a round tone, the Max series would be an excellent choice.

Michael Dawson

Dream

Paper-Thin Crashes, TriHats, and Libor Hadrava Stacks

Musical, affordable, and versatile options from Canada's twelve-year-old "newcomer."

Since 2005, Dream Cymbals and Gongs has been providing competitively priced handcrafted instruments that are designed by professional Canadian percussionists and manufactured by expert metalsmiths in China. The company's product line includes traditional Chinese effects (Lion, Han, and Jing), interesting contemporary designs (Re-Fx), and five different drumset cymbal categories. These include thin Bliss and Vintage Bliss lines, the medium-weight Contact series, the heavier Energy models, and the raw Dark Matter cymbals.

This month we're reviewing a few cool additions to Dream's catalog: Paper-Thin Bliss crashes (14"–19"), two sets of 14" TriHats, which come with three different cymbals to allow for a wide range of sonic options, and the equally versatile 10" and 14" Libor Hadrava signature stack packs, which include a Bliss series pang and a Contact series splash/crash. Let's dig in.

Paper-Thin Bliss Crashes

Bliss series cymbals have earned a solid reputation for providing a warm, dark, and complex vintage-type tone and soft stick feel at an extremely competitive price point. (For example, a 16" Bliss crash sells for $131.) The surface is micro-lathed by hand, and the bow has a low, gentle slope. The small bell helps increase articulation, and the entire surface is hammered before and after lathing. The new Paper-Thin crashes, which are available in 14"–20" and 22" sizes, are incredibly lightweight and pliable. I could easily bend each of the ones we were sent to review (14"–19"), and the bows could be partially inverted with a little pressure. The resulting sound is super-fast, flashy, and responsive.

The 14" ($152) and 15" ($176) had a cool combination of splashy attack and complex sustain, while the 16" ($201) and 17" ($224) offered a more complete crash sound with a fuller and warmer attack, a fairly clean midrange pitch, and a long, rich decay. The 18" ($229) and 19" ($283) Paper-Thins had a deeper, darker, and trashier tone, which made them excellent choices for swells and sustaining crash-ride effects. The 16" and 17" functioned great as all-purpose crashes; they provided a full crash from all dynamics. The 14" and 15" sizes would be best for fast accents that cry for a sound that falls in between a splash and a crash.

All of the Paper-Thin crashes have a soft feel and responsive voice. They really excel at lower volumes, but they can stand their ground in moderate to moderately loud applications. The bells have a highly integrated sound, which could be cool for bursts of quiet color, but they won't produce a clear enough tone for most applications. If you need a crash with a more substantial ride and bell sound, check out the Bliss 18"–22" crash-rides. Those are pretty killer too.

TriHat Elements and Diversity Sets

Consistent with Dream's mission to give drummers more for less, the new TriHat sets come with three different 14" hi-hat cymbals, each of which can be swapped out for use either on top or on the bottom, resulting in six unique sounds. The sets, which come with a free clutch and zip-up gig bag, are available with a Bliss bottom, Contact top, and Energy top (Elements set) or with a Bliss top, Contact bottom, and Energy bottom (Diversity set). Both sets sell for $481.50.

We began our test with the Elements series, starting with the medium-thin Contact top over the medium Energy top. This pair had fast, splashy open barks, á la Bernard Purdie, a soft and wide closed tone, and a complex and sloshy half-open sound. Using the medium-heavy Bliss bottom over the Energy top gave us a clearer stick sound, a brighter and purer open bark, and a more metallic and aggressive slosh. The Energy top over the Bliss bottom had a more conventional hi-hat sound, with cleaner stick articulation, a crisp foot chick, and a glassier open tone. The Contact top over the Bliss bottom had a breathier, old-school vibe that responded great at lower volumes. The Bliss bottom over the Contact top had increased presence and stick clarity while retaining a responsive feel. And the Energy

Paper-Thins

top over the Contact top had a cool combination of woody attack, complexity, and controllability.

For the Diversity set, we began with the thin Bliss top over the heavy Energy bottom, which provided a fun fusion of brightness and richness. Open barks were very quick and flashy, while the closed stick sound was clear and chunky and the foot chick was strong and crisp. Swapping out the Bliss top with the medium-heavy Contact bottom upped the power, brightness, and clarity for more aggressive playing. Putting the Energy bottom over the Contact bottom introduced a drier and more metallic flavor, while the Bliss top over the Contact bottom offered a more expressive and dark jazz-type tone. (This was my favorite TriHat setup among both sets.) Reversing the setup and putting the Contact bottom over the Bliss top added a touch of attack and brightness. Finally, placing the Energy bottom over the Bliss top gave off a dry, earthy, and expressive Jack DeJohnette–type hi-hat tone. Both TriHat sets were quite impressive for the wide range of useable sounds they provided.

Libor Stacks

Libor Hadrava Stacks

Boston-based Dream endorser Libor Hadrava designed two sets of stacks that pair a thin Bliss pang with a medium-thin Contact crash/splash to produce an interesting array of special-effects sounds. The 10" pair sells for $200 and the 14" combo is $296. Sonically, the two pairs offer the same range of tones, with the 10" cymbals having a higher pitch and shorter sustain while the 14" models sound more aggressive and trashy. You can set them up with the pang on top of the splash/crash for a sharp attack, trashy burst, and a short, warm sustain. Flipping that configuration upside down (with an inverted splash/crash over an inverted pang) delivers a slightly darker sound with a bit more attack and wash.

Placing an inverted pang over an inverted splash gives off a fast, articulate hi-hat–type sound with a little bit of wash. This was my favorite setup, as it recalls some of the super-cool hi-hat stacker sounds used by top fusion/electronica drummers like Jojo Mayer, Benny Greb, and Mark Guiliana. Flipping the setup so the splash/crash is over the pang provided a brighter attack and a more choked texture.

The four previous configurations can be set up on a regular cymbal stand without any modifications to the felts or washers. If you have an x-hat, you can also explore two additional combinations. Placing the pang over an inverted crash/splash gives off a very tight electronic-like "chip" tone with a short sustain, while the inverse (splash/crash over inverted pang) sounds very trashy and defined with a varying amount of wash, depending on how tightly the cymbals are held together with the x-hat clutch. Like the TriHats, the Hadrava stacks are incredibly versatile for players looking to get unique, customizable tones out of small cymbal combos.

Michael Dawson

TriHats

Noble & Cooley

SS Classic, Horizon, and Walnut Snare Drums

150-plus years in business, and the historic American company continues to build some of the finest drums around.

Noble & Cooley's history goes all the way back to 1854, when Silas Noble and James P. Cooley made their first marching snare drum in the kitchen of Cooley's Massachusetts farmhouse. After moving production into a small factory, Noble & Cooley began supplying drums to the Union army during the Civil War. By 1873, the company was building 100,000 drums a year.

Noble & Cooley has been building made-to-order drumsets and snares since the 1980s, and thus it's highly regarded as one of the forefathers of the custom-shop movement. N&C's high-end and highly musical drums are still being made in Granville, Massachusetts, and the company is currently helmed by sixth-generation owner Jay Jones and his son Nick. We were sent three new N&C snares to review: a 7x14 Solid Shell Classic made from tulipwood, a 6.5x14 maple/mahogany Horizon model, and a 6.5x14 walnut drum. Let's check them out.

7x14 Solid Shell Classic Tulipwood

Tulipwood is a member of the poplar species and is the same timber Noble & Cooley used to make drums for the Union army during the Civil War. The wood is harvested locally near the company's factory in Massachusetts, and for the 7x14 snare we reviewed, is steam-bent into a solid shell. Tulipwood has a drier and breathier tone than maple or birch but is still capable of producing a lot of high-end crack. Our review drum came in a natural gloss finish, which allows the gorgeous and unique yellow/green color of the timber to be on full display.

Solid Shell Classic drums have .25"-thick shells and N&C's patented Nodal Point lug mounting, which places the brass tube lugs at a point on the shell that has the least amount of impact on the vibration of the shell. The bearing edges are hand-cut and fine-tuned to ensure maximum resonance and projection. The brass throw-off is simply designed to provide the smoothest action possible.

Noble & Cooley is one of the first companies of the modern era to steam-bend shells, and they've been a longtime favorite by top session drummers. Our review drum had exceptional sensitivity and great midrange "honk," with clean, pure overtones and a quick decay. There's a touch of the dry, throaty tone associated with vintage marching drums, but this drum had plenty of presence and projection to cut through in contemporary drumset applications. Its tuning range is extensive—it doesn't choke out under high tension, and it doesn't lose clarity when tuned loosely. And muffling isn't required unless a controlled, dense tone is desired. It's no wonder N&C's solid-shell snares are so popular in the studio—they're true classics.

6.5x14 Horizon Maple/Mahogany

The Horizon series was originally introduced in the 1980s as a full drumkit made with unique shells that have an inner ply of mahogany sandwiched between horizontal-oriented plies of maple. The softer mahogany is used to give the drums a darker, vintage-type tonality to complement the high-fidelity sound associated with North American maple. N&C says the horizontally oriented shell construction allows the wood to resonate more uniformly, which translates into a vibrant drum sound with incredible clarity. Horizon series drums are designed to have the strong attack of a solid-shell but with a slightly shorter decay.

Tulipwood

Maple/Mahogany

The 6.5x14 Horizon snare we reviewed had a natural maple finish, but these drums can be ordered in a variety of gloss, sparkle, and matte finishes. Rather than a single larger vent, Noble & Cooley employs a symmetrical venting system that places smaller holes near several of the bottom lugs, tucked neatly behind the connecting tube. This venting system is said to improve the sound and feel of the drum. While we didn't have an identical snare with a single vent to compare it to, the Horizon we tested had incredible sensitivity and dynamic response and a soft, buttery feel at all tunings.

I felt the Horizon sounded best at a medium tuning, where I could articulate quick ghost notes and smooth buzz rolls effortlessly, and rimshots elicited just the right amount of midrange overtones. Tighter tunings were great for ultra-light symphonic-style playing and in note-dense genres like jazz, fusion, and funk. You can coax a nice fat punch at low tunings, but I'd reserve that vibe for the drum we're checking out next.

6.5x14 Walnut

Noble & Cooley decided to add a walnut-ply snare drum after purchasing the Witt Drum Company in 2015. Witt had developed a unique all-walnut shell with a pure horizontal ply layup, which falls right in line with the concepts employed by Noble & Cooley in its Horizon series. N&C is now making the walnut shells at its own factory, and the drums come with the same symmetrical venting, snare mechanism, and solid-brass tube lugs as are on the Horizon series.

Walnut drums are known for having a big, warm, dry tone with pronounced low-end frequencies. Our review drum came with black-nickel-plated hoops and lugs. It had eight lugs, as opposed to the ten that were on the Horizon and SS Classic. Like the other two drums, the walnut snare had amazing sensitivity and clarity, a soft player-friendly feel, and super-smooth, balanced overtones. It has a significantly drier and darker sound than the others, but it is equally versatile. It has a satisfying bite without excessive high-end ring at medium and higher tunings, and you can tune it super-low for an awesomely deep, dry "thud." Since the walnut snare was released last year, it's become one of Noble & Cooley's most popular orders. Not only does it look gorgeous, but it can also cover a wide range of sonic bases with aplomb.

Michael Dawson

Walnut

DW

Bass Drum Beaters

Four multi-tonal options for dialing in the perfect feel and sound.

DW recently released a quartet of bass drum beaters that are designed to provide multiple tones and textures from a single source. The Black Sheep and Control Beater XL models were created in collaboration with top endorsers Rich Redmond and John "JR" Robinson, while the 101AIR and Control Beater are being put to use by chops monsters Virgil Donati and Tony Royster Jr., among others. We were sent samples of each of the beaters to review. Let's take a closer look.

DWSM104W Black Sheep

This unique beater, designed in conjunction with Jason Aldean drummer Rich Redmond, combines two classic sounds in one. It features a round heavy-duty maple top that's stained black, as well as an adjustable 15-gram shaft weight. Also included is a removable synthetic wool cover that can be slipped over the top of the beater to transform the loud, dense, and punchy attack of the wood into a rounder and more vintage-like tone.

The Black Sheep is perfectly balanced to produce a strong and punchy sound with minimal effort. The shaft weight allows you to adjust the feel and throw of the beater to being more or less top-heavy. I preferred the extra power the weight provided when positioned at the top of the shaft. Positioning the weight at the bottom of the shaft made the beater feel lighter, which would help when more controlled dynamics are required.

The wool cover is held securely in place via a simple elastic band. We saw no premature wear in the fabric throughout our month-long review period. And the layer of fabric did a great job of eliciting a puffier tone from various types and sizes of bass drums when played at low and medium volumes, while still allowing for adequate attack when played more forcefully. This is a great option for drummers who want to achieve modern and vintage tones from a single beater. List price: $29.99.

DWSM101AIR

This lightweight model is a variation of DW's classic two-way felt/plastic beater. It features scalloped sides, so there's less mass in the head, which translates to a faster response without sacrificing durability or power. The 101AIR is the beater of choice for double-kick great Virgil Donati, who requires as much speed from his pedals as possible in order to execute fast, syncopated kick patterns.

The contoured felt side produces a nicely balanced tone with plenty of attack and full low-end response, while the high-impact plastic side emphasizes a stronger attack and denser punch. In comparison with the other beaters in this review, the 101AIR has a noticeably quicker feel, even with the shaft weight positioned at the very top. If speed, power, and clarity are of the utmost importance for you, then this is the beater to try. List price: $19.99.

DWSM110 Control Beater

One of the more sophisticatedly designed beaters we've seen in recent years, the Control Beater comes with three swappable playing surfaces (round felt, flat felt, and hard plastic) and four removable brass weights, and it has a self-leveling head that ensures that the beater strikes flat against the drumhead. The playing surfaces screw directly into the beater head and can be removed and locked into place easily by hand.

The brass weights, which weigh 10 grams

Black Sheep

Air

Control Beater

Control Beater XL

each, are positioned directly behind the beater head and can be popped out quickly once the head is removed. With all four weights in place, the beater has a very balanced feel and a powerful response. I preferred the feel of the Control Beater this way; it produced a powerful throw and a strong, punchy tone plus plenty of speed. Removing one or more weights gave the beater a lighter feel and a quicker response.

The flat felt head produced a great all-purpose tone with a dense, smacking attack and balanced low-end punch. The round felt head had a slightly softer yet more focused attack, and the plastic head provided the most extreme attack, clarity, and precision. The self-aligning beater head worked perfectly to ensure that it struck the drumhead as flatly as possible each time, and it never drooped or drifted off alignment throughout our review. List price: $29.99.

DWSM110XL Control Beater XL

This beater has the same design and features as the Control Beater, only with a longer shaft (8.15") and a pair of oversized beater faces (rectangular wood and rectangular felt). It was designed in collaboration with studio great John "JR" Robinson, who's widely known for having incredibly powerful, accurate bass drum technique. The beater faces measure 1.5"x2" and can be quickly swapped out by hand. The brass weights add power and acceleration to the throw, and the larger faces increase the volume and punch of each stroke. Both faces produce a huge sound with a punchy attack and maximum tone, with the felt face drawing out a slightly warmer timbre and the wood face providing extra clarity and articulation. This would be an ideal beater to use on larger drums (24" and up) and in situations where you want to achieve the biggest, fullest tone possible. List price: $29.99.

Michael Dawson

CooperGroove

GrooveGrip Performance Drumsticks

Crosscut grooves in the grip facilitate a more relaxed technique.

CooperGroove drumsticks feature a modification of traditional stick design with the intention of improving grip, stimulating pressure points, decreasing fatigue, and helping players who drop sticks due to sweaty hands. The namesake of these new tools is Chicago-area drummer Carlo Cooper, who decided to cut grooves in his sticks' handles after growing tired of sanding and taping sticks and wearing gloves to deal with grip slippage.

CooperGroove sent us a few pairs of 5As and 5Bs with acorn- and oval-shaped tips and a few with dipped handles. Models with ball-shaped tips and a larger marching stick are also available, as are double-cut sticks with twice as many crosscuts in the handles. Aside from the twenty crosscut grooves in the handle, the first thing I noticed about the CooperGroove was the oversized bead. The acorn tip on the 5A model was much larger than the tip on a Vic Firth Extreme 5B or a Vater Power 5B, for example, which might be a turnoff for those who like a smaller stick tip. The American hickory used in CooperGroove sticks is high quality and had a consistent weight. The sticks are finished with a water-based lacquer.

I don't usually get sweaty hands when I drum, and I've never had a need to use tape or wear gloves to keep from dropping sticks, but I could see how the notches cut into the CooperGrooves would help players with those issues. I consider an occasional dropped stick as a sign that my grip is too relaxed. But recently I've had some playing issues caused by a somewhat lazy grip, and I can attest to the fact that the following claim from CooperGroove's website is true: "The grooves provide sensory feedback; know where your grip is at all times." I feel that these sticks would also be great teaching tools, in that the grooves foster a heightened awareness of grip, which is crucial in the early stages of drumming. A sampling of customer reviews online points towards increased relaxation and a decrease in fatigue and dropped sticks. At $19.95 a pair, CooperGrooves are priced higher than most, but they do come with a money-back guarantee, which should make it easier for those who might be skeptical to try them out. To learn more, go to coopergroove.com.

Stephen Bidwell

6 More Mobile Apps Every Drummer Should Know

A half dozen fun, informative, and practical smartphone programs for drummers

by Miguel Monroy

According to a series of surveys conducted by Pew Research Center in 2015, sixty-four percent of Americans now own smartphones. And they've become increasingly useful for musicians. In the October 2015 issue of *MD* we took a look at nine iOS apps we felt every drummer should check out. In this article, we've rounded up six more, most of which also work on Androids.

Drumgenius

This incredible app is an audio dictionary of more than 400 drum grooves. The grooves are organized into several genres of music, including Afro-Cuban, Brazilian, Caribbean, jazz, pop/rock, country, and more. Most of the grooves also reference a drummer and a specific song that you can listen to for further study. After selecting a groove, you have the option to change the bpm and pitch. Although transcriptions are not included, we can see how this app could become an essential tool for students, educators, and anyone wanting to play along with different styles of drumming. While the app itself is free and comes with three loop downloads at no cost, users must purchase additional grooves for one credit each. A ten-credit pack costs $.99, a fifty-credit pack is $2.99, and an infinite-credit pack is available for $8.99. (iOS and Android)

Drum School

This app comprises four main categories of content: Grooves, Practice, Technique, and Hits. The Grooves section contains more than 260 beats in a variety of genres. The Practice section consists of more than 133 exercises, including rudiments and additional hand patterns. The Technique section includes twelve video demonstrations of proper hand and foot technique. The Hits section features lessons on iconic drum grooves that every drummer should learn. Each lesson in this app comes with a video demonstration of the exercise that can be sped up or slowed down. Each exercise comes with a transcription featuring a MIDI playback option, which allows you to select which limbs you'd like to hear.
(iOS and Android: $5.99)

Skills & Fills

This niche app is geared toward drummers looking to add new fills to their vocabulary. It offers lessons from Dennis Tideman's corresponding e-book with sections on single and double strokes, single and double strokes with the bass drum, double-handed fills, power fills, and "better watch out" fills. Each lesson contains a video demonstration of the skill required to play the fills, such as single strokes. Also included is a chart of groupings and a Fill Generator to practice the skill further. Each lesson closes out with a video demonstration of how the skills and fills can be applied in the context of a rock groove.
(iOS and Android: $9.99)

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KnockBox

This simple yet effective training metronome by drummer Daren Pfeifer allows you to hone your timekeeping skills. Users have the option of selecting between two- and sixteen-measure phrases. As you play along with the metronome, the click is slowly removed and then brought back in over a selected amount of time. This challenges you to keep your internal time steady as you practice. (iOS only: $1.99)

Music Maker Jam

If you're interested in making tracks to practice or perform with, this is a great place to start. Music Maker Jam is a free app that allows you to build beats and grooves in a number of popular genres, including hip-hop, rock, pop, and dubstep. Start out by filling the eight-track mixer with the included loops or your own recorded sounds, fine-tune the mix with the live editing function, and then share the track via email, text, or social media.
(iOS and Android: free to download, additional loops available for purchase)

ShowOne

If playing with backing tracks in a live setting is a regular challenge for you, this low-cost/high-functionality app may be exactly what you need. ShowOne allows you to import tracks directly from iTunes (while connected to your computer) or from various cloud services, such as Dropbox, iCloud, and Google Drive. During the import process, you can input the tempo of the track. The app will then split the playback into two mono channels. The first channel will include the track with a metronome and count-off, and the second channel contains just the track. You can shift the starting point of the metronome by ten-millisecond increments, if needed, and you can add a voice count-off. The app also includes an option to connect to an audio interface for four-channel playback. (iOS only: $8.99)

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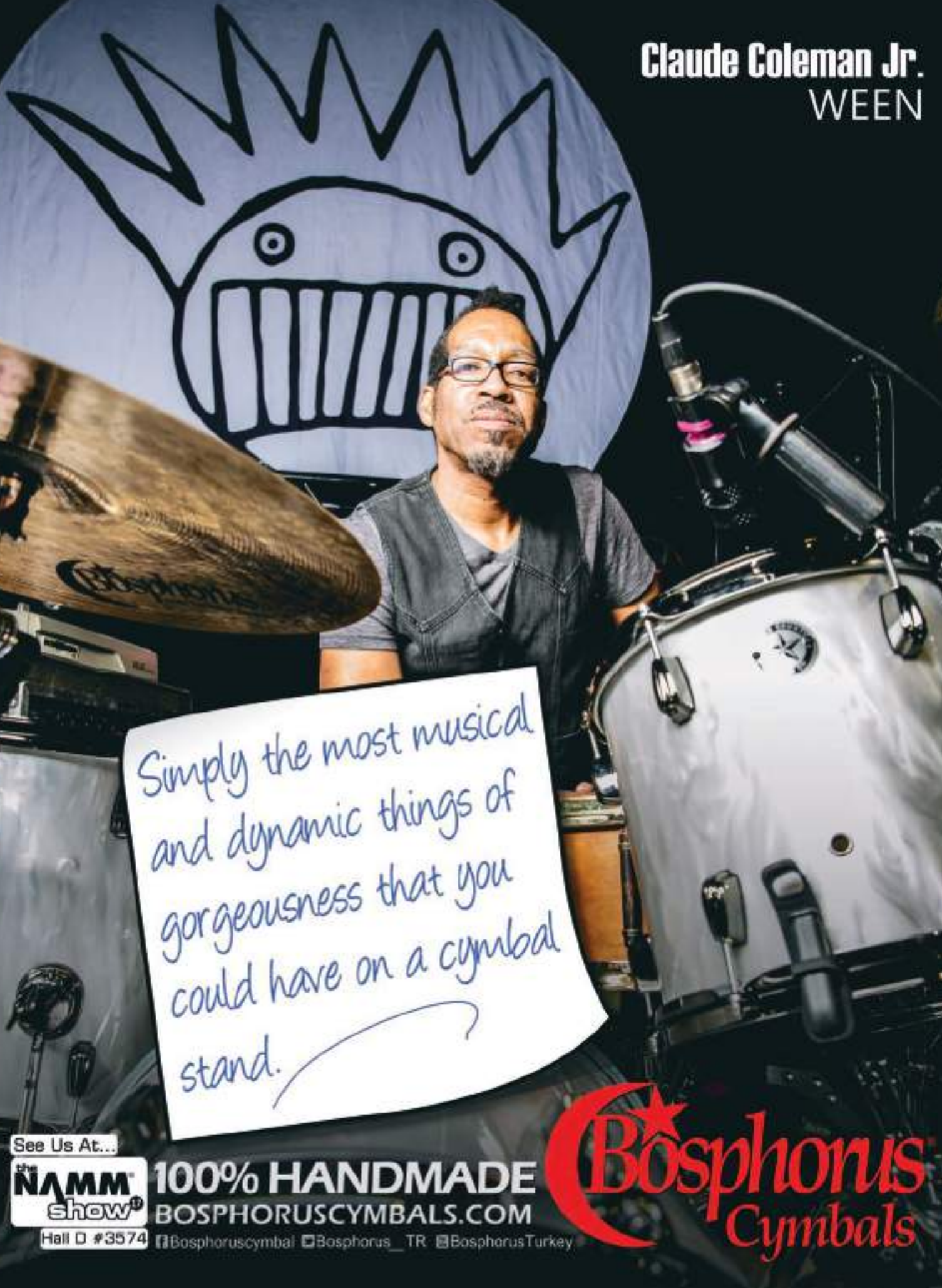
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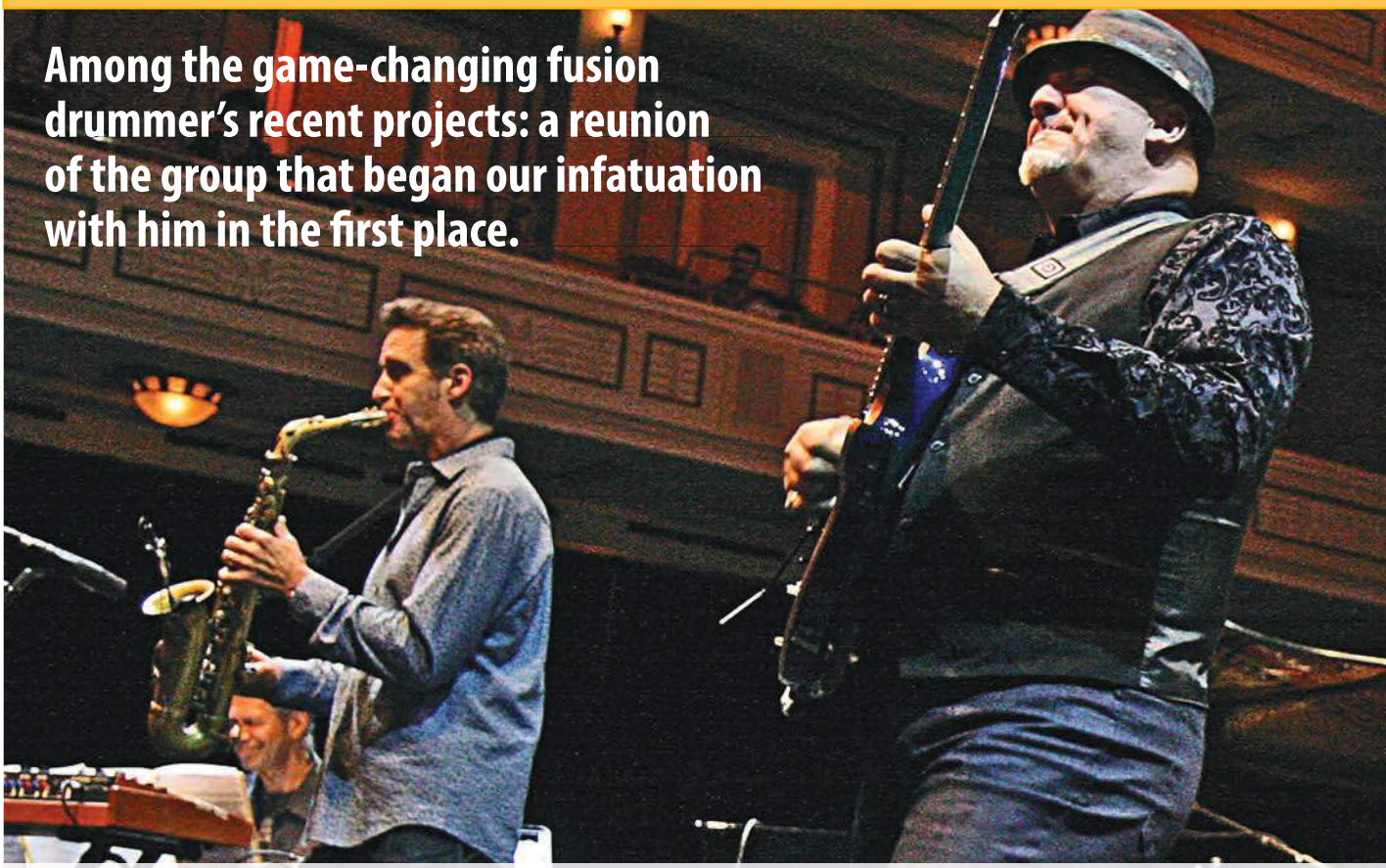
Dave Weckl

Among the game-changing fusion drummer's recent projects: a reunion of the group that began our infatuation with him in the first place.



In 1985, Chick Corea, who had helped usher in jazz-fusion with Miles Davis in the '60s, introduced a completely new sound. Appropriately naming his project the Elektric Band, the keyboard legend enlisted up-and-coming drummer Dave Weckl to see how much further he could push genre boundaries.

Three decades after the Elektric Band's inception—in a period that has found the keyboardist revisiting a number of his historic instrumental alliances—Corea has not only put the original lineup back together again to perform its classic work, but he's insisting that the unit will be continuing the uncharted explorations that set it apart initially. Since the group's classic lineup last convened, Corea, Weckl, guitarist Frank Gambale, sax player Eric Marienthal, and bassist John Patitucci have matured individually as well as collectively, and they're taking their music to new heights. Weckl for one is thrilled to be back touring with his E-Band mates. "In a word, it's fantastic!" Dave says with obvious glee. "It's a combination of comfort and familiarity, along with the freshness of it all happening in the moment at this mature stage in our careers.

"Chick always inspired creativity," Weckl continues. "Being around that energy helped propel us all in the direction of exploration, both musically and compositionally. I've always tried to grow, and all of life's experiences, musical and otherwise, have helped me evolve into who I am now. I strive to play my best, support the other musicians, and hopefully make some great music with feeling and emotion for all involved."

While his playing has progressed since the original Elektric Band days, Weckl has, in a sense, consciously devolved his drumset. "Being that it was called the Elektric Band," he says, "I was exploring the electronic aspect of my setup, both by triggering sounds from the drums and by incorporating pads. I have since let all that go and just play the acoustic kit. Now I use proper miking to help create the sound I envision."

While Corea's recent projects have been well received, predictions of the widespread return of jazz-fusion have proven overstated in the past. So where does Weckl see the current state of electric jazz? "CNN recently reported that jazz is dead," he says. "The E-Band just sold out a 250-seat club, two shows a night, for six nights in a row. So there still seems to be some interest—for this band, anyway. Chick is an icon, and we all have loyal fans who still enjoy what we do. I think there will always be an audience for electric jazz. But it is, and generally has been, a relatively small one."

Beyond the Elektric Band reunion, Weckl has been busy with his own group, plus tours with guitarists Oz Noy and Mike Stern, and with Norwegian bass star Chris Minh Doky's Nomads. "I do a good deal of teaching, recording tracks in my home studio, and producing other artists as well," he adds. "In fact, I'm embarking on a major teaching project soon. So stay tuned!"

Story and photo by Mike Haid

Dave Weckl endorses **Yamaha** drums, **Sabian** cymbals, **Vic Firth** sticks, **Remo** heads and muffling, **Shure** mics, **LP** percussion, **XL** cases, and **M-Audio** electronics.

George Thorogood and the Destroyers' Jeff Simon

Forty years ago he went electric with his guitar-slinging, blues-wailing childhood friend. Since then, millions of albums have been sold and as many miles traveled, and he's still the unstoppable heartbeat of his good buddy's band.

A George Thorogood and the Destroyers concert is like a prize fight. At a recent show, the blues-and-boogie rocker came out swinging with a full-tilt assault of classic tracks. "Bad to the Bone," "Move It on Over," "Who Do You Love?," "One Bourbon, One Scotch, One Beer"—with each immediately recognizable intro, everyone in attendance jumped up like the opening bell of a new round had been rung. And it's clearly the audience that Thorogood and his steady musical companion, drummer Jeff Simon, are locked in on. "From day one," the guitarist tells *MD*, "Jeff has kept us focused on what this thing is all about: the fans. Through the years Jeff has been the beat *and* the backbone of the Destroyers."

The guitarist and drummer forged a bond in blues in Wilmington, Delaware, years before the young musicians would be able to order their own bourbon, scotch, or beer at the local watering hole. "I've known George since he was nine years old," Simon explains. "We grew up together. He and my brother, Pete, who bought my first drumkit, were my two biggest influences. I'm not a technician, but I've learned a lot over the years simply by observing. Back then we studied Rolling Stones records, dissecting everything Charlie Watts played on the drums. For me he was and still is *the guy*."

Turns out there's more than meets the eye to that last statement. In 1981, Watts and company took the relatively unknown Destroyers out on tour with them, and when Thorogood's *Bad to the Bone* album was released the next year, the band quickly became a permanent fixture on rock radio. But it was no overnight sensation. Ten years earlier, Thorogood, who'd already paid some serious dues playing acoustic blues on the bar circuit—when he wasn't humping gear for Hound Dog Taylor—decided to get loud, and formed the Destroyers with Simon. "The two of us were literally living out of my van when we hit Boston and a blues club called Joe's Place," the drummer recalls. "George opened up for Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry, which lit the fuse to other connections and led to forming a trio and our first [self-titled] recording, which was released in 1977 on Rounder Records. Currently George is in the process of doing a solo acoustic album for the same label, so he's coming back home, so to speak."

The influence of pioneering blues drummers like Muddy Waters' Willie "Big Eyes" Smith, Bo Diddley's Clifton James, James Cotton's Kenny Johnson, and Howlin' Wolf's S.P Leary is at the core of Simon's playing; Little Feat's late, great drummer, Richie Hayward, also left a lasting impression, in some very specific ways. "When we toured with the Feat in '93," Simon remembers, "I got to watch him every night. I incorporated splash cymbals into my setup because of him. He was also responsible for my viewing the drums as way more than just a timekeeper. He was just a gem as a human being as well."

A sense of humanity permeates all the best R&B and blues music; according to Simon that really hit home for the Destroyers back in 1975, when the group opened a club date for Hound Dog Taylor and the HouseRockers. "The most important thing that happened to us was gaining the encouragement and approval of those guys, [despite] the color of our skin. It wasn't about race, it was about honesty." Simon valued that experience, and today spends much of his downtime doing outreach work with the HART (Handy Artists Relief Trust) Fund, an arm of the Blues Foundation that provides resources for musicians in need. **Bob Girouard**

Jeff Simon endorses **Remo** heads and **Zildjian** cymbals and sticks.

Steve Jennings

Mike Portnoy

The best canvas for a progressive drummer with energy and ideas to burn? The double concept album, of course.

Story by Ilya Stemkovsky
Photos by Paul La Raia

Pink Floyd, *The Wall*
"It's probably my favorite album of all time, by any band in any genre. It's the ultimate musical experience. Nick Mason's drumming is relatively simple, but it's about [serving] the emotion and what Roger Waters wrote, the ups and the downs, and the incredible production. It always moved me."

The Who, *Tommy*
"Keith Moon remains one of my biggest drum heroes. He played with such personality, it puts a smile on my face. *Tommy* brings me back to my childhood."

Mike Portnoy endorses **Tama** drums and hardware, **Sabian** cymbals, **LP** percussion, **Remo** heads, **Promark** sticks, and **Vater** Slick cymbal fasteners Nut.

Portnoy at his home studio, which doubles as a veritable prog museum.

There's no sleep for Mike Portnoy. He's simply everywhere, touring and recording all year long with a variety of artists, including Transatlantic, Flying Colors, and the Winery Dogs. He even recently filled in with Twisted Sister. But at the moment Portnoy is most excited—maybe more excited than he's ever *been*—about his latest effort with former Spock's Beard multi-instrumentalist Neal Morse, *The Similitude of a Dream*.

"I consider this album the biggest masterwork of my entire career," Portnoy says without hesitation. "It gives you that same feeling as when you listen to Pink Floyd's *The Wall* or the Who's *Tommy*. It feels incredibly complete, and shows every aspect of what we do together, from epic prog passages to almost poppy, Beatle-esque moments to soaring, emotional pieces of music that will bring you to tears."

An old-school concept album, *The Similitude of a Dream* is Portnoy and Morse's eighteenth studio record together, and it's filled with everything you'd expect from them. And, as Portnoy describes above, it's all over the place. From the odd meters and precision of "Overture" to the soaring vocals of "City of Destruction" to the country honk of "Freedom Song," there's a *lot* of drumming over the double disc's hundred-plus-minute running time. But self-editing never seemed to be the priority for the creators.

"Neal and I are both the kings of 'more is more,'" Portnoy admits. "Over our career together, we've got something like fifteen songs over the thirty-minute mark. He and I are all about the epic composition. We had a lot of material, and Neal was working around a lyrical concept that needed time to fully explore. We write for the sake of the music or the story. When it's reached its destination, then it's finished."

The sheer number of compositional sections and kit patterns Portnoy has to remember for *Similitude* is mind-boggling. So perhaps it should come as no surprise that when asked if he could immediately execute any part he's played in his entire recording career, the drummer answers, "Absolutely. I've been blessed with an elephant's memory. At this stage in my career, I'm in six different bands. And maybe that's why I do well juggling multiple bands, because it's easy for me. For some reason, I have that music in my head, ready to go at any moment."

So what does the confessed record junkie see as the key ingredients of a great double album? "Well, there's the double album, and there's the double *concept* album," Portnoy notes, citing the Beatles' *White Album*, Led Zeppelin's *Physical Graffiti*, and Elton John's *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road* as favorites among the former group.

"I have a soft spot for concept albums. The great concept albums are stories that take you on a journey, and they emotionally feel like a film or a book. With *The Wall* and *Tommy*, for instance, you're taken on an intense roller-coaster ride of emotions."

Frank Zappa, *Joe's Garage*

"Vinnie Colaiuta's drumming was just mind-blowing. You had all these crazy time signatures on 'Keep It Greasy,' like 19/16 and 21/16. That's the first time I heard drumming like that. Virtuoso stuff that remains some of the most complex stuff ever put to vinyl."

Genesis, *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*

"Genesis at the height of their excess. Phil Collins on 'The Colony of Slippermen' and 'In the Cage' is incredible. In the prog world, Collins' drumming is underrated and overlooked. People immediately think of Bill Bruford or Neil Peart, but Phil's drumming was just as inventive and groundbreaking for its time."

Spock's Beard, *Snow*

"Neal's swan song with Spock's Beard was a masterpiece, showcasing his songwriting prowess, and it was a good sign of what was to come of our work together."

Kenny Aronoff

This is one of life's simple truths: The more you learn, the more you realize how much more you have to learn.

Here is another simple truth: Kenny Aronoff understands this better than almost anybody.

It's a key reason he's one of the most valued drummers that history has ever known.

Story by Billy Amendola

Photos by Alex Solca

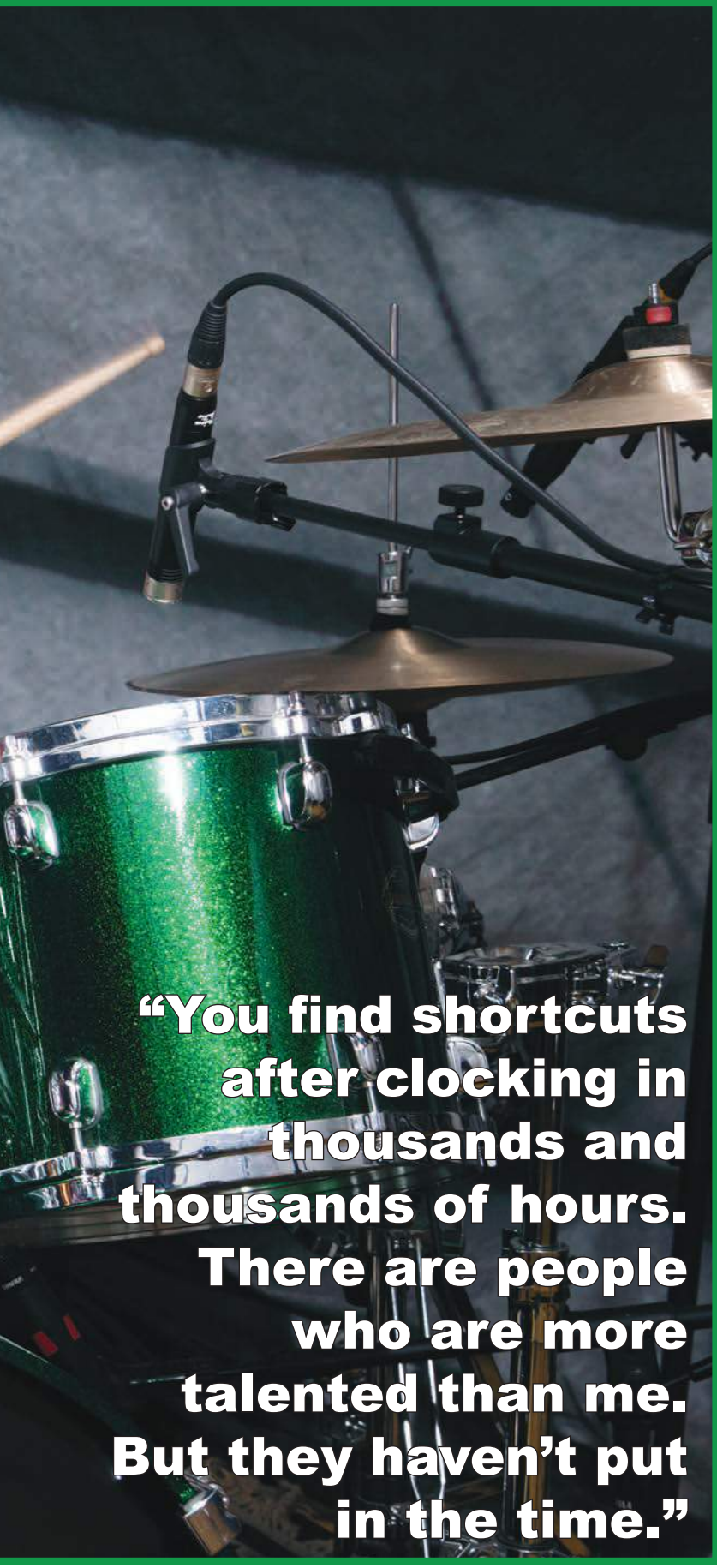
Kenny Aronoff does not know what the word *relax* means. The day of this interview he was in the midst of a tour with John Fogerty, and on his days off he was either on stage with the BoDeans or dashing home to do some recording at his studio and prepare for a Neil Diamond tribute show.

Meanwhile, he's been active with the Supersonic Blues Machine, a project featuring Lance Lopez, Fabrizio Grossi, Walter Trout, Billy Gibbons, Eric Gale, Robben Ford, Steve Lukather, and Warren Haynes. The group has an album out called *West of Flushing, South of Frisco* and recently toured Holland, Norway, Abu Dhabi, and India.

Aronoff also has tons of press promo scheduled, including speaking and clinic engagements, in support of his new autobiography, *Sex, Drums, Rock 'n' Roll!* You can even catch him on the big screen, double drumming with former Billy Joel band member Liberty DeVitto in the music documentary *Hired Gun*.

So, relax? No, that's basically a foreign term to Kenny Aronoff.

TAMA



Actually, the drummer doesn’t even seem to recognize the word *sleep*, something he probably should have been doing rather than speaking with *MD*, since he’d managed only two hours the night before while flying home. “My dad *never* slept,” Kenny’s son, Nik, says. “He was just always immersed in music. I think that had something to do with the competitive nature of the business. But I remember him always being like that, since I was a little kid. It’s certainly one of his most admirable qualities. I mean, look what he’s accomplished—who can touch him?”

While the competitive nature of the music business may explain Aronoff’s work regimen, it’s only part of the story. To this day, Kenny still does his best to get in three hours of practice every day. That’s not just about paying the bills; it’s about dedication and a fierce determination to be the best he can possibly be. And it’s about the realization that when he’s at his best, he’s helping the artists he plays with be *their* best. For thirty-plus years the superstars of the music world have been going to Aronoff first. From an artistic perspective, at least, his way is clearly the right way.

Aronoff was born and raised in a small town in New England, and as a teenager he traveled far down a path toward a career in classical music, including studies with the famed timpanist Vic Firth. In the mid-’70s he focused on rock and jazz performance, eventually kick-starting his career in Indiana with John Mellencamp in the early ’80s. By the ’90s, the singer-songwriter would be recognized as merely the first major name on a remarkably long list of artists who have sold more than 300 million records featuring Aronoff. Though the two haven’t worked together for several years, Mellencamp praises Kenny in *Sex, Drums, Rock ’n’ Roll!* In fact, to this day just about anyone the drummer has ever worked with—keep in mind that his résumé takes up twenty-three pages in the book—is quick to offer nothing but glowing comments about him. That includes Rush drummer Neil Peart, who wrote the foreword.

Of course, mountains of love have also come from the readers of this magazine, who’ve put Kenny at the top of various categories of our Readers Poll numerous times. This will be the fourth time he has graced the cover of *Modern Drummer*, representing a remarkable, growing legacy that shows absolutely no signs of slowing down. Just like Kenny himself.

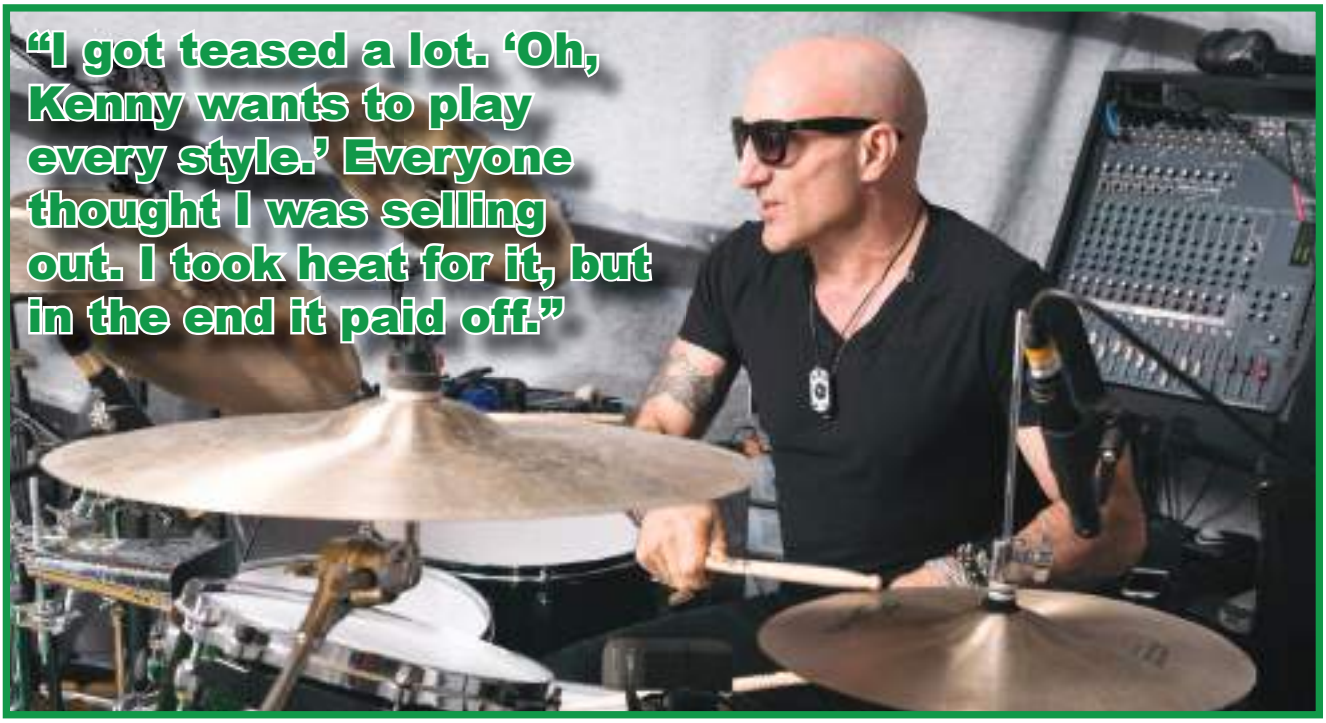
MD: So, why a book now?
Kenny: Good question. I was first asked to write a book in the late '90s, but I said no because I didn't think I had enough to say at that time. Then, when I was being interviewed for the Joe Satriani book [*Strange Beautiful Music*], after I subbed for Chad Smith on the Chickenfoot tour, I was asked again, but then I didn't have the time. And honestly, I really didn't want to only talk about drumming. I wanted to talk about life and what I've learned from being a musician. So I eventually started writing a journal, and every day I jotted things down about what I'd learned and how I made it in this business.
MD: Did you gain any insight into yourself in the process?
Kenny: Absolutely! It turned into a whole other thing. I found these calendars with all my sessions, tours, gigs, and personal life experiences. It wasn't easy to find the time. I was writing in between my days off from touring and sessions, sometimes up to sixteen hours a day. Then it turned into 800 pages, which had to be edited down to 300. I didn't think it would happen. My book publisher, Hal Leonard, pushed me to continue with an editor, and we got it down to 350 pages.

So it became this life story that then taught me. And I started to ask myself the big question: *Why me? How did this happen?* I started putting down what I thought were the ways and means a person can be successful in life—and stay successful. My life has taught me lessons I would never have figured out if I didn't write the book. It got me to do some serious reflecting. I think the beautiful thing is that it's out while I'm still heavily busy in my career. It's not a memoir. This is what I've done, and this is what I'm continuing to do. And these life lessons are teaching me how to do what I do better. The book really became this huge therapy session. I was just doing what I do. Now I know how to do it even better.
MD: Who were some of your drumming heroes as a kid?
Kenny: At first most of my heroes were jazz drummers, because that was the music playing on my parents' turntable. I was hearing Buddy Rich, Louie Bellson, Gene Krupa, Philly Joe Jones, Joe Morello, Tony Williams, Elvin Jones, Jimmy Cobb, any drummer playing with Miles Davis—*Kind of Blue* was always on. Then, when I saw Ringo and the Beatles, I started getting more into rock drummers. The drummer who blew me away most was Mitch Mitchell. He was my favorite because he was a true jazz musician. I liked Ringo, but at the time I didn't appreciate him the way I did later on. I thought he didn't have much technique and was playing so simply.

The other guys who caught my attention were Keith Moon, another drummer who I didn't appreciate until later on, because I thought he was sloppy and reckless. John Bonham is a big influence. Ginger Baker was so melodic. The thing I liked about Moon, Mitch, Ginger, and Bonham was that they were really jazz and blues guys playing rock—Bonham swung more toward R&B. But all these guys could really swing.

For the Jimi Hendrix movie starring André 3000 that I did [*Jimi: All Is by My Side*], I had to play like both Ginger and Mitch. And there was a big difference in the way Mitch swung and the way Ginger did. I really prepared, like I always do, for those drum parts. Getting the phrasing and the touch right for Mitch was way harder than I imagined. He played very lightly, so I even used a 7A stick and tried to play like that. I put my head into what it was like to be an actor, trying to really copy him to play the part right. His swing was a very specific feel—in my opinion, much closer to traditional jazz. Whereas Ginger seemed more of a rock drummer who was influenced by jazz. Ginger was a bit more heavy-handed—but not bombastic. A bit more locked and tribal sounding.
MD: Can swing be learned, or do you think it's a natural feel you're born with?
Kenny: I do think it can be learned, if you put in the time. Everyone is born with a certain natural thing, but I think for certain players it comes from what they were listening to and the environment they grew up in, which for those guys was when jazz was huge.

It was always in me. I always found it very challenging to play stiff and with no feel—robotically—which many times I was asked to do. They wanted it like a machine. And you do it, if that's what the artist or producer asks for. But I grew up listening to jazz and playing shuffles, which swing. So for me it was more natural. But, like I said, you can learn any feel if you put in the hours.



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Kenny Aronoff

Tools of The Trade

In his home studio, where the photos in this piece were taken, Aronoff plays a **Tama** Starclassic Maple kit in green sparkle finish. The kit, which previously accompanied Kenny on tours with John Fogerty, Michelle Branch, and Melissa Etheridge, features a 10x12 tom, 16x16 and 16x18 floor toms, and a 16x24 bass drum. The main snare is a 5x14 Kenny Aronoff signature Trackmaster model; his auxiliary snare is a 5x12 piccolo. His **Evans** heads include a Heavyweight snare batter and Hazy 300 snare-side on his 5x14, G12 batters and G1 resonants on the toms, and an EQ4 bass drum batter.

Aronoff's **Zildjian** cymbals include 15" New Beat hi-hats, two 18" Armand Medium Thin crashes, a 21" A Custom Projection ride, and a 20" China. His cowbell is an 8" **Meinl** Kenny Aronoff signature model. His sticks are **Vic Firth** Signature 5Bs.

Kenny also employs **Yamaha** DTX drums. "I started using electronics around 1986," he says. "I had one of the first ddrum brains. The late session great Larrie Londin turned me on to those. I was using triggers on my drums with the sounds from the Mellencamp record, because that drum sound was so popular on the radio; I had to sound like that live.

"In 1996," Kenny continues, "I did sessions and toured with Bob Seger. I used triggers on my snare drum for songs like 'Like a Rock,' with that big, *gushy* snare drum. Then forward to the 2000s, with Melissa Etheridge, I would create all these loops, sort of percussion-type parts. I had this hybrid kit, with pedals that would trigger them, and I'd hit pads for the intro, the chorus…and I would switch back and forth from the acoustic and digital drums for certain parts of the song.

"Now with John Fogerty I have the Yamaha DTX pads, and I have handclaps and sometimes a sampled bass drum—just for me to hear in my ears. I use electronics often, sometimes two kits, side by side, intertwined with both acoustic and electronic drums, sometimes just a few pads and triggers."

Kenny also endorses **Humes & Berg** cases, **Shure** mics, and **British Audio Engineering**.

MD: What drummers are you digging these days?

Kenny: That's a hard question, because I'm not hearing too many up-and-coming drummers, mostly because I'm working so much and don't have the time to sit down and listen like I did when I was growing up. But the drummers that I'm a fan of are the great rock drummers that play for the song. I like Dave Grohl, Taylor Hawkins, Josh Freese, Chad Smith—they all have great feel. And I'm always going to like Vinnie Colaiuta and Ringo.

MD: Speaking of Ringo, how was it to play with him for *The Beatles: A Grammy Salute*?

Kenny: Amazing! Playing with Ringo at the Grammys, and playing Ringo parts for Sir Paul McCartney at the Kennedy Honors, that's when I really had to emulate his playing and feel.

I grew up seeing Buddy Rich, Louie Bellson, and Gene Krupa, so with Ringo it was a young way to think; we all thought he didn't have the technique. "He's just a simple drummer with long hair." It wasn't until I wrote a three-part series on Ringo for *Modern Drummer* in the late '80s that I really started digging in and transcribing his parts. And I realized what a badass he was. It was really difficult. He had a certain style and came up with brilliant parts that I would have never come up with. His playing was very different and so musical. It was clever and perfect for their music. It just doesn't get any better than that.

Playing next to Ringo, I watched him the whole time. I made sure I always honored him. I tried to stay out of the way of his hi-hat. Charlie Watts has that same thing. Mick Jagger once told me as we were playing, "Mate, stay out of the way of Charlie's hi-hat." That's because they're both so musical. And

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I realized what he meant, because I was playing like a session guy, perfectly in time, playing accented 8th notes. Both Charlie and Ringo have a lot of swing in their hi-hat.

I'll ask people: What do you think is the most important part of the drumkit? And most will say kick and snare. I did too at one point. But it's really the hi-hat or ride cymbal. That's what's keeping the time; that's the metronome. The kick and snare have to lock up with that. And that's what locks with the rest of the band. If you have your hi-hat or ride locked with a really good rhythm guitar player, like, say, when I play with Joe Satriani, who has impeccable time—oh, man! I just line up my hi-hat with Joe's guitar and then the whole band. And that was another way of looking at drumming that I didn't when I was younger. You essentially lock with him and then the bass follows you—that's the groove. That's the bottom line.

When I play R&B and country, I play the hi-hat soft. John Fogerty once said to me, when working on a song, "The hi-hat is too heavy-handed." And I knew exactly what he was looking for, so I lightened up on the hats and I swung it a bit, as if it was a country track. And he turned around and looked at me like, *That's it!*

I was talking to Dave Grohl about all this when I played the first Kennedy Honors show, because he never really thought about it. He's so good, one of my favorite drummers. His way of playing is his way, no matter what. I was telling him about when I played the Who segment and then I played the George Jones segment. There were seven artists honoring the Who, all with different singers, and then the George Jones segment was with traditional country artists. I said to Dave, "Watch how I completely change my style of drumming."

MD: What did you do differently?

Kenny: In the George Jones segment I didn't bury my bass drum beater into the bass drum head. I pulled it right off. I wanted to feature more of the tonality of the traditional stand-up bass. And I didn't play as hard. I played the hi-hat very soft—just enough for the band to hear it as a metronome. No bashing at all. I didn't hit the snare rim at all, only in the center of the drum or just a little bit back. But for Keith Moon, I hit everything bombastically—on the edge of the beat, reckless, every snare hit a rimshot, beating and crashing the crap out of my cymbals…. And I'd slam the beater into the bass drum head.

MD: So when you're playing with so many different artists and it's one song into another, are you thinking about all this?

Kenny: I'm aware of it before, and then as I'm doing it I'm making sure, like a method actor playing a part, that I make my adjustments. I basically step out of my body and observe myself. Once I get going and I've got the technical thing going, I'm very quickly stepping out of my body and listening to myself as if I'm in the audience. Or I look at it like I'm the producer of whoever I'm playing with. Then I go back into my body for technical things to make sure I execute that properly, then back out of my body and listen to make sure it's sounding the way I would want it if I was the producer of that band or artist.

It's not about me. It's so much about the artist and the band. When I became a session drummer I had to learn so many styles of music and make it all sound authentic. If I was recording with Willie Nelson, Johnny Cash, Waylon Jennings, or Kris Kristofferson, I played differently from the way I would with a contemporary country artist, who might rock harder. When I recorded with B.B. King, I wouldn't play the same way I record with Tony Iommi of Black Sabbath.

My advice is to specialize in one style of music but keep learning everything else. And I got teased a lot for that. "Oh, Kenny wants to play every style." Everyone thought I was selling out. I took heat for it, but in the end it paid off.

I have to say, I was lucky in that I happened to live at the right

Pete Nelson
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time. Added to that, I'm a workaholic, and I never said no to a gig—I would fly anywhere, anytime. I went after it. I saw the Beatles when I was eleven; I played with two of them fifty years later. I always say, "Dreams do come true, but they don't come by accident." I made my dreams come true. I took action. You have to work your ass off; otherwise, when you get the opportunity, you won't be able to keep it. You need to put in so much time and dedication, and you need to recognize problems as they're happening and resolve them quickly.

You find shortcuts after clocking in thousands and thousands of hours. The thing I was able to recognize was, sure, there are people who are more talented than me and who can play faster, but they haven't put in the time or had that experience. They won't know how to solve a problem. It could be a live situation or a recording—either way, you have to know everything about everything.

MD: Do you play much differently in the studio from the way you play live?

Kenny: My overall concept is that when I record, I want it to have that magical feel that only happens in a live situation. And live I play so that it's good enough that they could make a record from that performance. There's less of a difference these days.

MD: How so?

Kenny: In the last ten years or so, it's been shows like the Kennedy Center Honors, the Obama inauguration, or a tribute show where I might be playing for a bunch of different artists. It's live, but it's all being recorded and filmed forever!

MD: Can you recall any specific challenges with any of those shows?

Kenny: Well, for the Kennedy Honors I was playing with Steven Tyler and doing that famous Ringo solo from "The End" on *Abbey Road*. Man, you have to pound it and nail it, because everyone knows it. You can't speed up or slow down one millisecond; it'll be out there on the internet for the rest of your life.

MD: How do you handle the pressure of such high-profile gigs?

Kenny: My brain is like a complete pie. Over the years it becomes more and more slivers. As a kid I had twenty slivers, and now, probably a billion. [laughs] And my brain will go to every single slice when I'm playing a million miles an hour. I'm thinking *time, feel, elbow, finger, knee, foot, drum, singer, tuning, mics,* anything I can see or think about. I'm thinking nonstop as I'm playing.

MD: And this doesn't distract you from playing?

Kenny: The weird thing is, the more stuff that's going on, the more calm I am. I think that's why I'm able to multitask as I do. I have about twenty projects in the works as we speak. And then there's general life stuff on top of all that. I'm wired that way, so it feels normal to me. You can call that an advantage gained from experience, or it's just the way I was born. I can take on a lot. I have energy and desire that

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my brain can handle. And it's probably why I've been so successful and able to sustain a career all these years.

I didn't get hired to play all these different shows because I can play great; you already have to *have* that. It's because I can handle last-minute changes on the spot. If Sting, or anyone for that matter, walks up to me fifteen minutes before the performance or two hours before the show, I can make those changes quickly—tempo, feel, count-offs, you name it. And it happens. And I'm comfortable with all of it. And then there's sixteen cameras shooting and recording the performance. And you can't make a huge mistake, or you will *not* be asked back. I know, every year, something big is bound to go wrong. And I know I have to be the one to react and help resolve that on the spot.

MD: Do you remember any specific situations you saved?

Kenny: Yes. I won't name any names [laughs], but one year, one of the singers was supposed to hold a note for six beats, and I was bringing the band in. Well, he didn't hold the note. For a second it threw me off. I turn and look at the MD, and he's holding his hand out as if the guy was holding it. And all of a sudden, the band was left in the air and it was a split-second decision: *Okay, I'm bringing the band in now.* And I went for it, and it worked.

My muscle memory for that period was six beats, but it was the feel. The MD that night told me I saved the show. I didn't rely on anyone else. I relied on myself. I'm like a Navy SEAL. I take orders. But at any given moment, the soldier knows he might have to become the general and make the decision if no one is there to give the order. You have to be both. And that's the position I'm in many times. And if you do make a mistake—another massive challenge—bury it, right away! Get rid of it and don't let it distract you for a second. You cannot focus on it. And that's very difficult for me, because I'm a perfectionist.

Remember those slices in my brain I was talking about? If all of a sudden I start focusing on the mistake, then 25 percent of the pie, out of 10,000 slices, is being used up in my brain on what I just did. And then you lose it because you're not putting in 100 percent. So give it up immediately!

MD: What has being a drummer taught you?

Kenny: It's taught me all about myself. Drumming has taught me about life. It's taught me to be honest and humble, and how to be a team player and work with people. I know I was born, but now I know why. The best I can figure, I have 1,300 gold and platinum records. So when I do a record with someone who's one of the most famous artists in the world, I've played on more records than they have. Let's say a new artist comes to my studio. They come because I have way more experience. But the bottom line is, I work for them. And I act like that.

I'm not saying I know everything. There are still things I can learn. Recently I worked with an eleven-year-old kid. I may be coming from a place of experience, but he can be bringing out something that's new. And the producer was impressed with the way that I could talk to that kid and get what he was saying. It's because, even though I played with the greatest artists in the world on some great records, I treated that kid and listened as if he was the greatest and just like any of them. I wanted to hear what he wanted and give it to him the best I could.

We as drummers have to always remember, we have to listen and learn and lead, but in most cases we are not the bosses. Unless you're the star doing your own thing, or it's your band, you have to surrender in a way.

MD: Most people don't know how schooled you are. Do you feel you have to dummy down a bit to play on some sessions?

Kenny: That's complex. There are a few ways to look at that. Every style of drumming can be perfected to the max. And every style, done right, is just as difficult as the other. Let's face it, not everyone can play like Tony Williams, Billy Cobham, Dave Weckl, or Vinnie Colaiuta. But I've found that simple playing is just as difficult to perfect as complex playing. It's like looking through a telescope is one world, and looking through a microscope is another world, and both views are valid.

I have a saying: I'll never be as great as I want to be, but I'm willing to spend the rest of my life being as great as I *can* be. Every night when I'm playing with Fogerty or the BoDeans and I'm laying down simple grooves—or a session that calls for that—to really do it right is very difficult. *Anything* done perfectly is difficult. As humans, we're not perfect. Some people have better timing or better grooves than others, but all I know is I'm always striving to be as good as what I hear in my head. I'm not that way 100 percent of the time—but I get very close. And to do that I have to concentrate and focus. It doesn't just happen by accident.

MD: So did you learn to adapt to simpler playing as you got older and more experienced?

Kenny: Definitely! When I first started playing with Mellencamp, I was trying to be Billy Cobham. I was playing lots and lots of notes. And when I first got in the band, I can clearly see now why I didn't get to play on

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the record. I played percussion on it. Tom Knowles played on the first hit, "I Need a Lover," and session greats Ed Greene and Rick Shlosser played on the album *Nothin' Matters and What If It Did*. And that had two hits in the Top 40.

At that time, I didn't have a reputation for being the guy playing for songs to be on the radio. And that taught me that I had to put in the thousands of hours playing simple pop-groove backbeats. Up until then, I'd been putting in all those hours to be Billy Cobham and anything that was complex with lots of notes. So it was that simple. If someone is doing one style of music for all those hours, then that's what you'll be better at. And you shouldn't compete with anyone, because you can waste time practicing things that can make you a not-so-good drummer. You have to be conscious and go after the right things, like groove and time.

When I was a little kid I was strictly self-taught. No one was teaching rock 'n' roll in the little town where I grew up. But then I took lessons from the band teacher, and then at eleven years old I got my little rock band together. So I didn't have much to do with the junior high school band, and I didn't march or anything. Then later someone suggested I take lessons from Arthur Press from the Boston Symphony Orchestra. At the end of my sophomore year in high school I went to Boston and started studying mallets, reading, timpani, orchestral snare drum…. And the summer before I went to college, I was practicing eight hours a day.

MD: What would you work on?

Kenny: Technique. I started playing bebop and big band. When I was younger I would play along to records and songs on the radio. At that time they didn't teach drumset at the University of Massachusetts or Indiana University, though they do now. After I graduated, I started studying with Alan Dawson and Gary Chester. So when it came time for having the vocabulary and the depth to come up with parts for John's music, I was lacking in that realm. That's because I hadn't been doing pop music on a regular basis. And then I actually became the drummer I used to make fun of. [laughs] It was a lesson in life. And I have no regrets at all.

MD: One last question. Do you ever think of retiring?

Kenny: Never. It's not even in my vocabulary.

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Martin Axenrot

The Swedish demon can be heard in all his glory on Opeth's twelfth studio album—a study in getting timeless sounds and performances on a new-world recording.

Listening to the airy, floating, Baroque-style "Persephone," the opening track from 2016's *Sorceress*, one would never imagine that when Opeth was founded in Stockholm, Sweden, back in 1989, it was an out-and-out death-metal band. The second cut, the album's title track, offers no further clues; the opening '70s-prog-like groove is nudged along by drummer Martin Axenrot's bouncy Purdie/Porcaro shuffle and an ELP-esque synth-bass hook, then shifts into a 16th-note power-metal vibe. And just as you're settling into *that*, the band unleashes a '70s-style fusion flurry straight out of the Return to Forever playbook.

by Mike Haid

Christer Lorichs

This unpredictable combination of genres and sounds is certainly far different from the band's early approach, but it's highly appealing—and speaks volumes about the depth of Axenrot's influences and creative reach. "This album allows me lots of room [to play] classic hard-rock drumming," Axenrot says. "That's more where I come from, so it felt natural and made it easy for me to get into the mood and feel of each song's unique style."

According to Axenrot, the old-school approach extends to the way the drum tracks were recorded. "Just like on the last Opeth album, *Pale Communion,* bassist Martin Méndez and I were well rehearsed for *Sorceress*," he says. "We had our parts finished in three days. My opinion is that the last part of a song is played with more conviction if you've played through the whole song, rather than just doing a separate take on each part. Cutting and pasting takes away a big part of the presence and dynamics in drum tracks.

"It is amazing to me what you can do with today's technology," Axenrot adds. "So of course a small adjustment to an otherwise great take is absolutely fine with me. But for me to deliver my best, I must get it all done in the same take."

Classic-rock signposts can be found throughout *Sorceress*, for instance on the very Jethro Tull–like "Will o the Wisp." Axenrot plays a smooth, relaxed 6/8 groove but doesn't come across as if he's mimicking any of the great Tull drummers. In fact, he says, "I never sit down to study a drummer. I don't believe in the schooled approach at all. I like listening to bands and songs, and if I like a song, I'll play along with it. And if I'm lucky, I'll learn something that adds to my drumming. As Al Pacino's character said in *Carlito's Way*, 'You can't have a late start, and you can't learn it in school.'"

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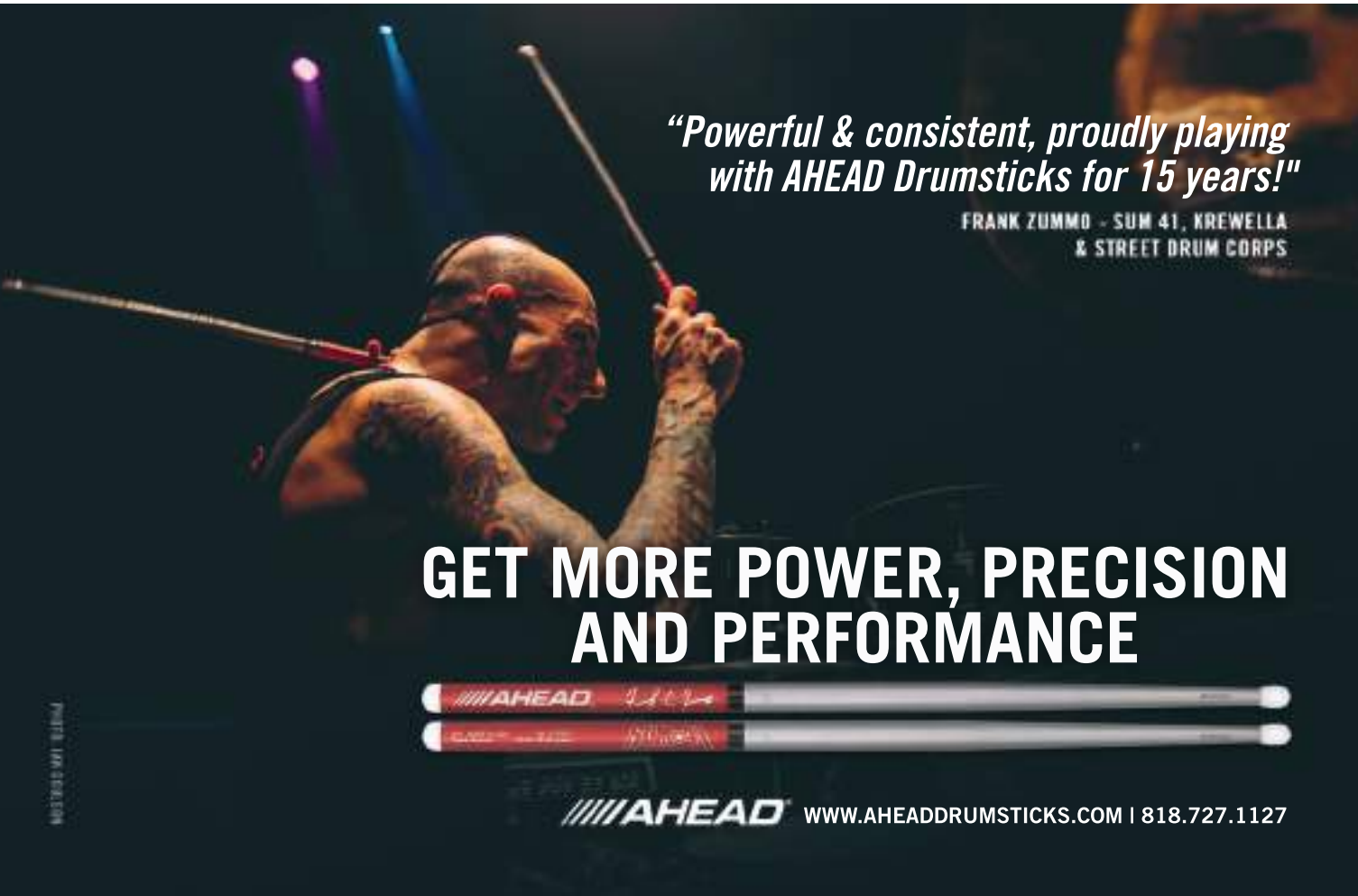
Still, Axenrot is not without his drumming heroes. "The players I've been influenced by, and am still inspired by, are all in bands that play music I like," he says. "They all have a musical approach to their drum parts; they're playing with the song and are a huge part of the band's overall sound. They all also have a signature sound that is easily recognizable. Drummers like Ian Paice, A.J. Pero, Dave Lombardo, Mitch Mitchell, Cozy Powell, Charlie Watts, Mikkey Dee, Kim Ruzz, and Simon Phillips—these are the kinds of drummers that have influenced me the most."

When pressed, Axenrot does acknowledge Phillips' work on the classic Judas Priest album *Sin After Sin* as an influence on one *Sorceress* track. "My inspiration for the intro of 'Chrysalis' was based on the way Simon played on the 6/8 masterpiece 'Dissident Aggressor,'" Martin says. "I have always liked that kind of aggressive China-cymbal-based shuffle with a somewhat slower, old-school double bass drumming approach. A groove like this also needs to be unedited and not quantized. If it had been digitally adjusted to so-called perfection, the feeling and dynamics would have been completely lost. There is also an old Uriah Heep vibe on 'Chrysalis.' Lee Kerslake and Ken Hensley made their shuffling drum-and-organ parts a trademark, and this song follows a similar path."

The playing of another Axenrot influence, Deep Purple's Ian Paice, shows on the blazing *Sorceress* track "Era," with its constant motion and rudimental-style power drumming. When told that his syncopated, flowing chops authentically capture the same raw emotion found in early-'70s rock recordings, Axenrot responds, "It's very interesting to hear so many different associations people get by listening to our



music. In the case of 'Will o the Wisp,' the working title was 'Jethro,' so we all were clear about the direction and influence. But what goes on in [lead vocalist, songwriter, and guitarist] Mikael Åkerfeldt's head is another thing completely. He has very diverse tastes in music, so who knows what influences he's channeling when he's creating these songs. I just listen to what he's created and come up with a drum part that I feel best fits the song. The fun thing for me on 'Era' is that it's structurally quite simple and straightforward, but the drumming is really intense throughout. The demo had a different beat in the intro, which we played around with and then changed in the studio. This track is actually much harder to play than it sounds."

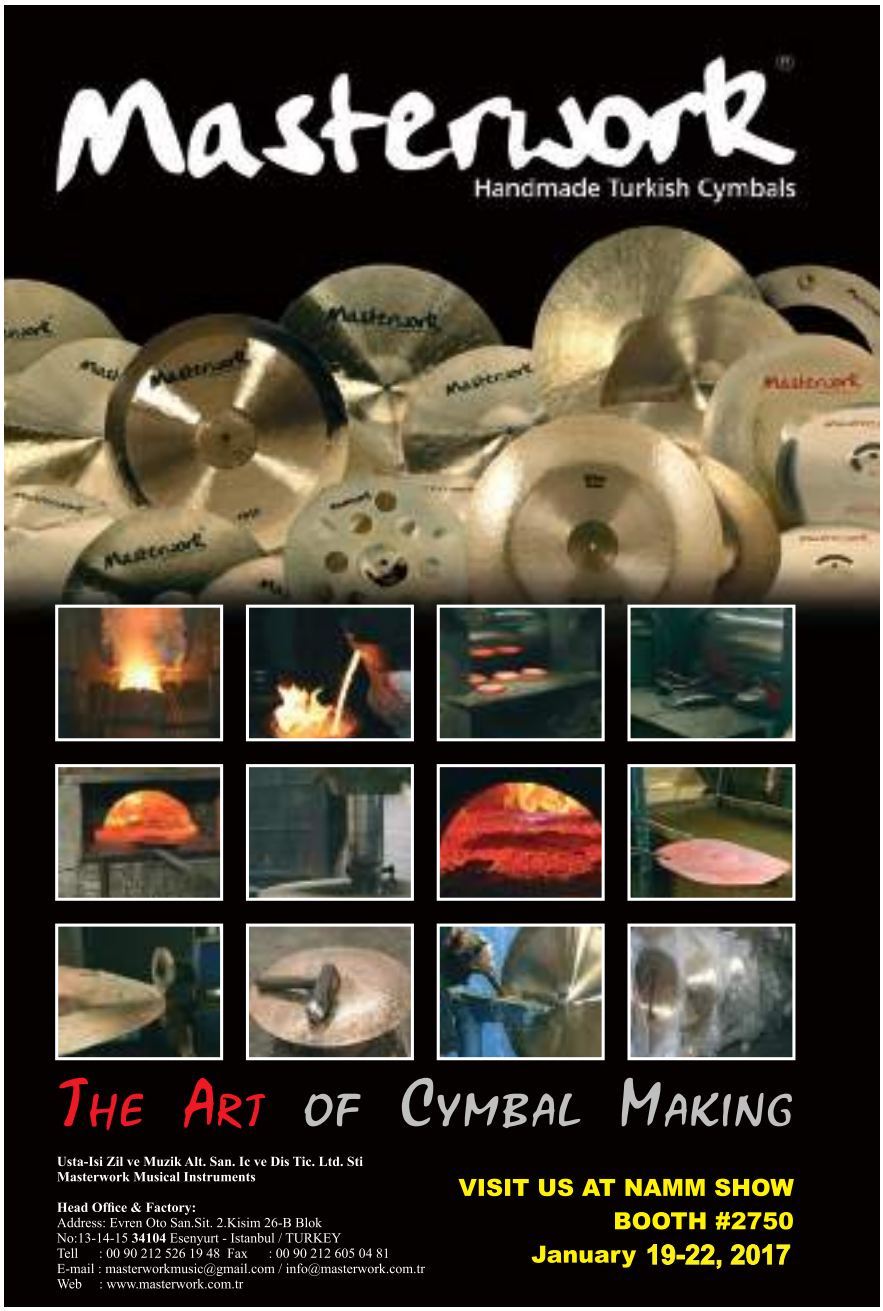
Axenrot describes taking a cinematic approach to coming up with his parts. "On 'Era' we tried to create a feeling like everything is close to boiling over—like someone is chasing you. This is often how I come up with ideas for my playing. I think about how I can create something to enforce how the song is supposed to impact the listener. So I think in terms of, say, walking in mud, or being chased through the forest, or having my back to the wall, or being invisible in the middle of a city. You get the idea."

Perhaps the heaviest track on *Sorceress* is "Strange Brew," which eases into its prog-metal core with subdivisions over 4/4 that create the illusion of an odd meter. "Mikael presented to me the idea that I think he and guitarist Fredrik Åkesson came up with together for this song," Axenrot explains. "I felt a dark, Jimi Hendrix/Robin Trower blues influence. The group Magma also comes to mind on this one. The initial groove is very intense, with an odd-time-signature feel. It is freely played in the moment, and I think it will be played that way on tour as well. The next part was a bit harder to create, since we follow Mike's vocals, which differ in length, and then we shift to a bluesy feel. It's quite an intense journey in just a few bars."

To help capture the vibe the band wanted for the new recording, Opeth returned to Rockfield Studios in Wales, where classic albums by Queen, Rush, Judas Priest, and Mike Oldfield were made. Producer/engineer Tom Dalgety was once again at the board, and the crew completed *Sorceress* in twelve days. Among the beneficiaries was Axenrot's sound, which is fat and punchy, allowing the drummer to sink into the groove and create a thick, meaty pocket.

"I'm very pleased, not only with the sound of the drums but the overall sound of the band on this recording," Axenrot says. "Having Tom Dalgety recording us again and doing the mix was the key to achieving the exact sound we were looking for. He knew precisely what we wanted and managed to translate it perfectly into the final mix. This record has a more classic, hard-rock spirit, with an organic sound, which I personally like very much. I feel our sound on *Sorceress* is heavier, in a hard-rock way, and more musically straightforward.

"There's a very wide spectrum of influences and styles in our music," Axenrot continues, "which has become a bit of a trademark for us. There's been a continuous development of our sound since day one. I like the fact that this record sounds real and feels like a live, vibrating band playing together in the same room, creating a powerful energy that is rarely heard in today's recordings. Sounding analog in a digital age is a challenge. I think we captured that very well on *Sorceress*."



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Great '80s Drum Performances

Part 2: JAZZ AND FUSION

by Ilya Stemkovsky

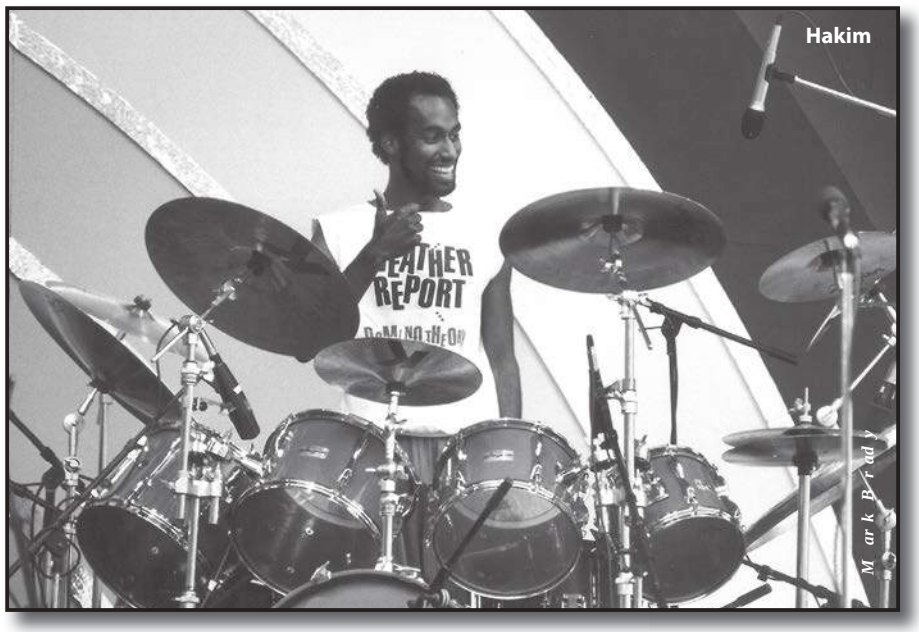
The '80s might not be anyone's first reference point for the golden age of jazz, but a closer examination reveals wonders under the surface. Sure, traditional acoustic jazz was no longer in favor, though some of the established innovators of the '60s and '70s were still playing at a high level. Plus, the so-called "young lions" movement would help keep swing alive and introduce the drumming world to the legends of the future.

But it was the rise of fusion (then not yet a dirty word) that most strongly shaped the decade and its influence on the next generation. The '80s was a high-octane period of more!, more!, more!, and excess was the name of the game. So, much of that newer, Reagan-era fusion style (think less Return to Forever and more keytar) featured incredible technical facility from a new breed of player and, yes, lots of synths and electronic drums.

The recordings featured in part two of our ongoing feature series on great '80s drumming tracks range from well-known examples of players announcing their arrival on the scene to household names of yesteryear who might have been years, even decades, past their prime but weren't ready to hang it up just yet. No, jazz and fusion didn't take over the radio airwaves, and they got no play on MTV. But the following examples prove that creativity was still very much a part of the drumming landscape.

John Scofield
"Techno"

John Scofield consistently used killer drummers and has multiple entries on our list. He showcases **Omar Hakim** on this slinky track from his 1986 album *Still Warm*. The linear hi-hat work is a delight, and Hakim gets to really shine with ideas at the end of the form, which has a couple bars of ripe-for-fills open space. As the tune progresses, Hakim opens up on his ride and toms, building tension and excitement. The close-out vamp is where he brings the nuclear weapons: constant waves of fills across his drums and cymbals that reach higher and higher to a peak intensity. Drummers love Scofield, because he loves them back and really lets them *play*.



Marc Johnson
"Bass Desires"

By 1985, with the influential fusion band Weather Report, of which he was a member, firmly in the rearview mirror, **Peter Erskine** was ready to rumble, appearing on several innovative ECM albums that gave him a springboard to swing, groove, and shape the music with aggression and his inimitable touch. On the title track to bassist Marc Johnson's *Bass Desires* record, Erskine opens up with the lightest ride pattern possible, before bringing in a set of audacious floor tom and snare hits that set things off into the stratosphere. What follows is a how-to in tension, color, and pure energy. Erskine battles guitarist John Scofield in a match to the death, not shy about bringing the volume way up before the soft, ghost-note breakdown for the bass solo. Helmet and seatbelt required.

Chick Corea
"Quartet No. 2, Part 2 (Dedicated to John Coltrane)"

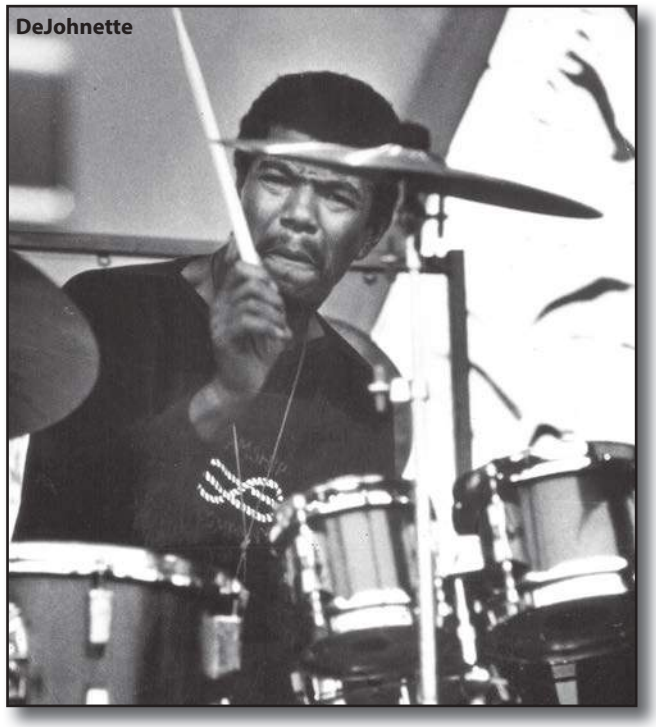
Chick Corea's 1981 album *Three Quartets* is full of intricate rhythms and compositional invention, and the band assembled by the keyboardist brings fire and virtuosity to every bar. On this burner, **Steve Gadd** plays a signature martial snare pattern on the top head, syncopating accents and locking in with the piano and upright bass with laserlike precision until he starts swinging. By the time you get to Michael Brecker's turbulent tenor solo, Gadd is *unhinged*, crashing away with abandon. The drum solo is quintessential Gadd—unaccompanied snare triplets and melody-line mimicry at first, then a conclusion featuring funky hi-hat and tom work leading into dramatic rolls and cymbal bashing that rocks as hard as any metal group of the day.

John Scofield
"Blue Matter"

"Finding the groove is simple," **Dennis Chambers** said in the May 1989 issue of *Modern Drummer*. "Listen to what the bass player's doing." Chambers and bassist Gary Grainger are certainly hooked up on this funky track from the 1986 album of the same name. What begins as a slow, spacious swing with a walking bass line turns into a charging groove workout where Chambers plays a flurry of kick drum triplets under a steady hi-hat pulse. The triplets go freely over the barline, and Grainger adds his own percussive slap and pop as he pleases, so things move along tourniquet-tight, but with wide-open gaps and an adherence to improvising. Breathtaking stuff, and a fine example of Electric Fusion Rhythm Section Playing 101.

Keith Jarrett Trio
"All the Things You Are"

Another warhorse standard gets the trio treatment, on this 1983 date from Keith Jarrett's nascent but soon-to-be-legendary working band. **Jack DeJohnette** was no stranger to small-group piano jazz, having worked in Bill Evans' late-'60s outfit, so by 1983's *Standards,*



Vol. 1, he knew as well as any drummer how to fill up space while supporting the leader with both traditional and modern playing. DeJohnette stokes the embers with quick brushes at the top, keeping it straight but throwing some jabs underneath Jarrett's aggressive piano lines and vocalizations. Soon he switches to sticks,

and we're off to the races, the drummer blurring barlines with no remorse. Things settle slightly for a bass solo and the outro-head return to brushes. The seeds of these masters reworking the classics have been firmly planted.

Wynton Marsalis
"Chambers of Tain"

If the composer names a track after you, you're doing something right. **Jeff "Tain" Watts**, along with other musicians on this date, rose as part of the "young lions" movement of players returning to acoustic jazz roots with a modern approach. Written by pianist Kenny Kirkland, this track off 1985's *Black Codes (From the Underground)* comes out hot, hot, hot, eventually becoming a swinging vehicle for some serious blowing. Following turns from Wynton and Branford Marsalis, it's Kirkland's solo where Watts really heats up, the tempo increasing noticeably, along with the dynamic interplay. The drum solo could have easily been heard during a Rush concert, with its heavy snare rolls, roundhouse tom fills, and cymbal mayhem, so it was clear there wasn't anything *too* traditional about Watts' ways.

Herbie Hancock
"Well You Needn't"

From the sound of this track on Herbie Hancock's 1982 *Quartet* record, it's obvious that **Tony Williams**, whom all the young-lion drummers worshipped, was not ready to lie down in the new decade. Wynton Marsalis blows his trumpet on the session as well, so it's clearly not an "us and them" thing. Thelonious Monk's music is always fertile ground for improvising, and the rhythmic attributes of his tunes give drummers lots to work with, so it's no surprise that Williams devours anyone who comes in his way here. There's the bonkers tempo where he excels, the pseudo-Latin ride bell groove he returns to, and the jarring fills that confirm he still has a thing or two to say. Tony made his name in the '60s, but his sage playing in the '80s is always worth a listen.

Jeff Beck
"Behind the Veil"

"Control is something that can be sacrificed for emotion and excitement in a live situation, but not in the studio," **Terry Bozzio** said in the December 1984 issue of *Modern Drummer*. Over the course of his varied career, Bozzio has worn loincloths and makeup, played everything from an electronic kit with Missing Persons to the orchestral behemoth he performs clinics on today, but on record he's always assuredly in control. On this reggae track from the 1989 album *Jeff Beck's Guitar Shop*, Bozzio leaves huge gaps of space where he's content to simply keep time with hi-hats and kick until he decides to load up holes with colorful cymbals or gnarly snare and tom fills. No check-me-out attitude here, just a reserved and totally musical example of how to support a melody.

Richie Kotzen
"Unsafe at Any Speed"

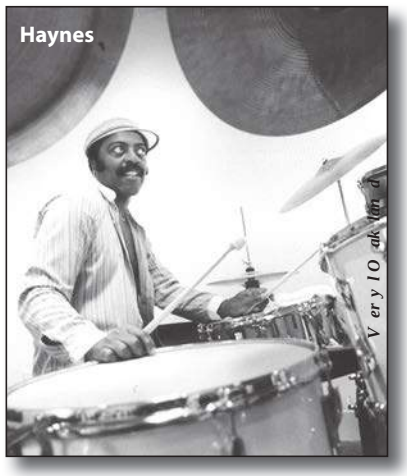
If you only know **Steve Smith**'s playing from Journey or Vital Information, this track will knock you out of your chair. "If you can hear in your head what it is you want to hear on the drums and get the chops to pull it off consistently," Smith told *Modern Drummer* in the August 1986 issue, "then you're on your way to developing your own individual voice." What Smith must have heard in his head for this number from Richie Kotzen's self-titled 1989 album was notes, and lots of them. Following a swing intro fake-out, it's double bass fury at a breakneck speed, as Smith keeps pace with Kotzen's shredding guitar. Steve throws in insane snare and tom fills throughout before taking a breather for some through-composed hits and preparing for liftoff once again. Smith would wear trad-jazz and melodic fusion hats soon enough, but here he's content to rock.

Pat Metheny Group
"5-5-7"

"When you go on stage, it's like a big conversation," **Paul Wertico** said in the December 1985 issue of *Modern Drummer*. "Music is about what you have to say on that particular day." Weaving in and out of an assortment of odd times, Wertico's smooth playing on this track from 1989's *Letter Form Home* is unobtrusive, unifying the music while providing a nice bed for the other players to sit on. It's all 16th-note ride cymbal and rimclicking on the intro and head, until the band switches to a swing feel underneath Pat Metheny's guitar solo. "The concept of my drumming was never patterns or rhythms, because I didn't really study that," Wertico explained. "It was always melody." A lesson for all, since *Letter From Home* won the Grammy for Best Jazz Fusion Performance.

Chick Corea, Miroslav Vitous, Roy Haynes
"Rhythm-a-Ning"

Another Monk tune, "Rhythm-a-Ning" lets **Roy Haynes** swing away on material he's intimately familiar with (he recorded with Monk in the '50s), and that famous ride cymbal sounds like butter thanks to the outstanding ECM production. Haynes, Chick Corea, and bassist Miroslav Vitous are a dream team of improvisers, and the attention to detail on this track from 1981's *Trio Music* is a wonder to behold as ideas fly by rapidly. Linear interplay between snare and kick is Haynes' bag, and that's on full display over the brisk tempo here, while the drum breaks include some two-handed hi-hat figures and generous use of a loud China cymbal. There's even timpani heard toward the end of the track. As with Tony Williams, this member of the old guard was still at the top of his game.



Michel Camilo Trio
"We Three"

Joel Rosenblatt splits drumming duties with Dave Weckl on pianist Michel Camilo's 1986 release, *Suntan/In Trio*, and it's sometimes difficult to tell the two apart from track to track, from the playing style to the drum tones. This Latin-esque tune opens with some driving two-handed snare work and kicks as backbeats from Rosenblatt, before the drummer locks in with Camilo's propulsive piano. Rosenblatt takes an early and lengthy solo, ripping some kick/

HARVEY MASON

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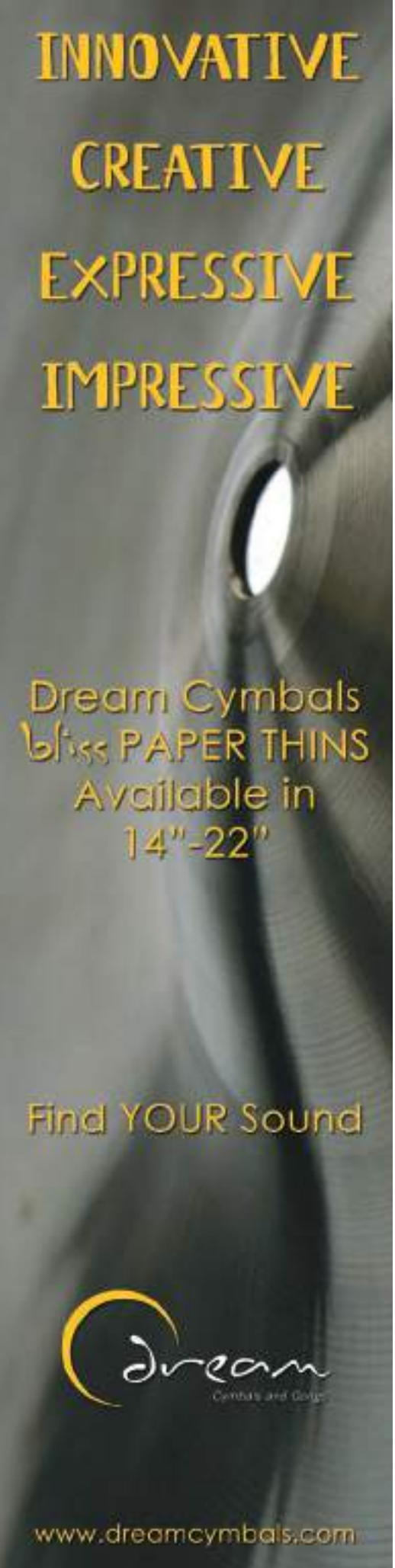
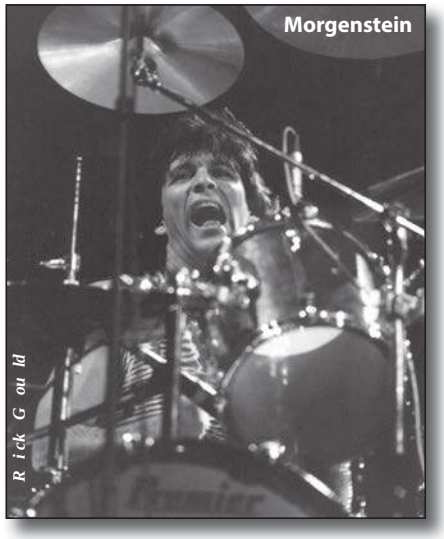


'80s Jazz and Fusion Performances

snare combos before unleashing a flurry of singles across the kit. He and bassist Anthony Jackson are *locked*, and the amount of information coming from any of the three musicians at any given moment is almost too much to handle. But that's why it's so much fun.

Dixie Dregs
"Cruise Control"



"How do you categorize a band that has a name like Dixie Dregs, and that sounds like Jeff Beck meets Mahavishnu?" **Rod Morgenstein** pondered in his July 1985 *Modern Drummer* interview. This cut from 1981's *Unsung Heroes* is typical Dregs—virtuosic guitar from Steve Morse and a fusion-with-a-twang sound that appeals to a different type of music fan. Morgenstein is trucking from the beginning, his approach encompassing studio-ready rock power with a healthy dose of chops. He makes good use of his brief solo space in the middle of the tune with some aggressive hi-hat/snare combos and overdubbed percussion. Categorizing is easy: It's awesome.

John McLaughlin and Mahavishnu
"The Wall Will Fall"

Maybe Pat Metheny's lighter music wasn't doing it for **Danny Gottlieb**, because the drummer left (to be replaced by Paul Wertico) and soon appeared in yet another version of John McLaughlin's Mahavishnu Orchestra. No, it didn't have the same rawness of the original band, and some of the production hasn't dated well (the *ping! pang!* of the electronic toms is unfortunately pure mid-'80s), but check out Gottlieb's assured performance on this track from 1987's *Adventures in Radioland*. Danny rocks a 12/8 with outrageous fill after outrageous fill, and the up-tempo swing sections are burning. "There seem to be many more playing opportunities for people who sound generic than for people who sound unique," the drummer told *Modern Drummer* in the April 1988 issue. Gottlieb's career has proven that trendsetters get work too.

L.A. 4
"Secret Love"

This track from the short-lived West Coast ensemble L.A. 4's 1980 release, *Zaca*, begins with a simmer, as drummer **Jeff Hamilton** works his brushes on a sweet bossa pattern perfect for a sunny picnic in the park. That lasts briefly, until the tempo is brought to hyperspeed with a furious swing that *moves*, albeit with an impressive dynamic level on the ride, plus kick/snare interplay that's exciting and precise. Hamilton and bassist Ray Brown are a match made in heaven, because they can cook but allow each other the room to speak. And their expression is never at the sacrifice of the almighty swing. Things end back in bossa-land for a breath-catching conclusion, but the lesson on jazz drumming has only begun.

Spyro Gyra
"Carnaval"

There are others who are more closely associated with the revolving drum chair in Spyro Gyra, but **Steve Jordan** appears on a couple of tunes on the group's 1980 album, *Carnaval*, with the title track a nice showcase for his well-honed recording chops. Jordan brings the Brazilian juices here with a samba snare lick to open the tune, then moves on to an insistent studio-cat funk beat that kicks the band into high gear. He knows where to place the bass drum, and nary a note is wasted when he's locked in. But just as Jordan switches to an offbeat ride pattern for a solo or outro, he makes the band take off. It's clean, focused, and a study of how to bring energy without being busy.

Woody Shaw
"Steve's Blues"

On the surface, **Carl Allen**'s drumming on this straight-ahead swinger from Woody Shaw's 1988 album, *Imagination*, seems perfectly fine, serviceable without any special characteristics that make it stand out. But check out the way Allen and bassist Ray Drummond comp behind the piano solo, emphasizing the feel over two, before jump-starting everything into a head-bobbing four that feels great. At song's end, Allen's breaks are a nod to Philly Joe, slick singles with just the right amount of lilt and rhythmic cool. Sometimes, keeping

it flowing is all the doctor ordered, and the young Allen's work here is a sign of what was to come in his successful career.

Brecker Brothers
"Jacknife"

Slamming funk fusion with intricate horn arrangements was the Brecker Brothers' forte early in their career, and they always had the top session players on their records to execute those charts at the highest level. **Richie Morales** was one in a long list of killer drummers associated with the group, and it's he who brings the titanic groove on this track from 1981's *Straphangin'*. Holy syncopations, Batman! Morales' kick is the center of the show here, punctuating different parts of the bar while still propelling the band forward. Check out the wicked snare chops on the head and how Morales and bassist Marcus Miller start swinging assertively under the sax solo. A New York fusion encyclopedia entry.

Yellowjackets
"Oz"

Will Kennedy glides through the changes of this opening tune from Yellowjackets' 1988 release, *Politics*, hopping and skipping on his ride cymbal but still accenting all the hits as they come. Yellowjackets weren't as smooth as some of the other light fusion bands of the time, allowing all the players to really bring it, and Kennedy's contribution here bridges the gap between simple support and blowing freely. The drums come way down under the sax solo, slowly rising in intensity and density, the strong quarter-note pulse being the glue keeping it all together. Having recently replaced Ricky Lawson, Kennedy was relatively new in the band at this point, but he was forging his own voice quickly.

Fred Hersch Trio
"The Surrey With the Fringe on Top"

Marc Johnson returns here, this time as part of pianist Fred Hersch's 1984 debut, *Horizons*. The standard "Surrey With the Fringe on Top" gets a thorough reading from the trio. Drummer **Joey Baron** drives the up-tempo swing with a ride that's set to attack mode and hip tom interjections that up the ante with each passing chorus. Baron takes the most hilarious (and melodic) solos in the business, and he starts his trades here with an absolutely wicked metric-modulation fill that works upward from his floor tom until he speeds up his snare, then works his way back down. He does something equally unconventional with crashes the next time around, so it's clear that all rules are out the window. Baron would go on to be an integral part of Manhattan's downtown scene in the late '80s and beyond.

Al Di Meola
"Beijing Demons"

This track from guitarist Al Di Meola's 1987 record, *Tirami Su*, features a slinky but powerful groove from **Tom Brechtlein**, the snares hitting on the "&" of 2 and 4, with

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some very subtle ghost notes thrown in for good measure. Brechtlein shares the space with percussionist Mino Cinelu but still finds room to add fun snare fills during a striking staccato bridge. Di Meola is an adventurous and incredibly tight rhythmic player, so Brechtlein's overall restraint does the music a well-needed service, even underneath a guitar solo where the drummer could whip out chops but chooses not to. Not everything is about showing the goods *all* the time, and Brechtlein knows when to pick his spots.

Bill Bruford's Earthworks
"My Heart Declares a Holiday"

By 1987, **Bill Bruford** was dabbling heavily in electronics, and his Earthworks project included lots of patterns played on pads. This track from the group's debut, however, is relatively organic from a drumming perspective. Iain Ballamy's jazzy horn lends the proceedings an avant-garde flavor, but only Bruford can navigate 13/8 with the sophistication heard here, even as the sound was always intended to be inclusive. "I want to produce music that isn't instantly disposable, that reveals itself over a period of time and bears many listenings," he told *Modern Drummer* in the February 1989 issue. "It's difficult to do that and *not* frighten off the listeners." Check out Bruford's end solo, a collection of subtle ghost notes and rolling toms.

Allan Holdsworth
"City Nights"

In the May 1987 issue of *Modern Drummer*, **Vinnie Colaiuta** said, "I go for it. It's not reckless, because I know exactly what I'm doing." That just about sums it up. Over the course of the brief two and a half minutes of this utterly wild track from guitarist Allan Holdsworth's 1989 album, *Secrets*, Colaiuta lays down the law, blazing over the start/stop arrangement and complex chord changes. The drumming goes way *out there*, and every so often everyone hits a downbeat together, so you know these guys are in total control. Insane polyrhythms, super-quick kick drum doubles, and head-scratching fills come at you like a hurricane, and it all ends before you've caught your breath. Going for it indeed.

Dave Holland Quartet
"Nemesis"

Bassist Dave Holland's material is a drummer's dream, with open-ended vamps to blow over and killer odd-time lines that provide something better to groove to than yet more blues changes. On this track from *Extensions*, featuring a frontline of alto saxophonist Steve Coleman and guitarist Kevin Eubanks, Holland and drummer **Marvin "Smitty" Smith** push and prod through the 11/8 with attitude, smooth ride cymbal work, and lots and lots of notes. Smith's outrageous tsunami rolls during his solo on "Nemesis" blow your hair back, but though the other musicians drop out, you still hear the line in your head because he outlines the structure so brilliantly. A few years later, Eubanks and Smith would team up for *The Tonight Show With Jay Leno*.

Chick Corea Elektric Band
"Got a Match?"

Chick Corea makes yet another appearance on our list, due to the fact that he employed some of the greatest drummers around. **Dave Weckl** is no exception, as he seemed to arrive fully formed on the eponymous 1986 debut from the Elektric Band. Weckl and bassist John Patitucci are magical over the initial Latin funk melody, tighter than tight, with chops aplenty from each, before they begin swinging their behinds off. Weckl works his hats and floor tom underneath the bass solo, then takes his own solo that's less about technique and more about how and where to add emphasis melodically. Weckl would go on to achieve deity status in the drumming world soon after, but here you can check out his outstanding work even at this early juncture.

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Brian Dunne

Story by Bob Campbell
Photos by Alex Solca

If you've ever seen *Live From Daryl's House*, it's a good bet that you've thought to yourself at least one time, *Now that's one gig I'd love to have.* And to be sure, the enormity of performing with pop and rock's greatest artists, in an old-school, seat-of-your-pants environment—on national television no less—is not lost on the drummer tasked with holding it all together week after week.

For seven years, Brian Dunne has been the drummer for Daryl Hall and John Oates, the pop-soul duo that spent much of the '70s and '80s at the top of the charts with hits like "Sara Smile," "Rich Girl," "She's Gone," "Maneater," and "Private Eyes." Among the drummers that contributed to Hall and Oates' albums are legendary studio cats like Bernard Purdie, Jim Gordon, Jeff Porcaro, Ed Greene, Rick and Jerry Marotta, and the group's longtime comrade Mickey Curry, so the bar that Dunne has to clear on a regular basis is *very* high indeed.

No less potentially daunting, Dunne is the drummer in the band of the highly successful MTV Live show *Live From Daryl's House*, which features a variety of A-list artists performing their own hits as well as songs from the Hall and Oates repertoire. Among the household-name acts Dunne has so far backed are Rob Thomas, Daughtry, CeeLo Green, Joe Walsh, Kenny Loggins, Cheap Trick, the O'Jays, and José Feliciano. It would be difficult to think of another drummer who so regularly has to nail such familiar and high-quality music in front of so many discerning listeners—not to mention in front of the artists themselves, who perform with Dunne a mere few feet away, with the cameras rolling and with precious little preparation.

Dunne is the quintessential pocket player, and a versatile one at that, with lots of professional experience of his own and a sound, groove, feel, and sense of time that are the envy of many. So he takes it all in stride—though even *he* has to occasionally stop and process how heavy his gig is. We caught up with Brian as he was busily shuttling between Hall and Oates shows and *Live From Daryl's House* recording sessions.

MD: You play a lot of different kinds of music on *Live From Daryl's House*. Do you personally have a wide variety of influences?
Brian: Definitely. I listen to just about everything, from rock to funk to jazz to R&B.... In terms of drummers who've really had an impact on me, I'd say, in no particular order, Vinnie Colaiuta, Tony Williams, Steve Jordan, Steve Ferrone, Max Roach, Elvin Jones, Bill Stewart, Dave Weckl, Steve Gadd, Maurice White, Fred White, Ralph Johnson, Jim Keltner, Brian Blade, Charley Drayton, James Gadson, and Zach Danziger. In terms of musical preferences, I'd just say that I gravitate toward music with a great pocket, no matter what the genre is.
MD: You met Max Roach by an interesting stroke of luck. Could you tell the story?
Brian: When I first met my wife, she told me she worked for a pretty well-known drummer. So I said, "I'm sure I know him. What's his name?" Her response was Max Roach! I had to sort of fill her in on just how deep he was. She had an idea he was good and somewhat important but didn't really get it. Needless to say, I let her know that he was in fact an absolute game changer and basically a historic American musician and, at the time, a living legend. I used to pick her up at his apartment on a weekly basis, and I got to know him, just a bit. I took whatever I could get. He knew I played and always treated me with great kindness.
MD: How did you meet up with Daryl Hall and land the TV gig?
Brian: When the show started, Shawn Pelton was the drummer, and everybody else was a member of the Hall and Oates band. I was asked later to sub for Shawn on the show. There was no actual audition process. The musical director at the time, the late, great bass and guitar player Tom "T-Bone" Wolk, saw me play with the Average White Band nine years before, when we opened for Hall and Oates, and he remembered me! So T-Bone called me up when they needed a sub for the show.

On the phone, T-Bone said, "We do this little show. I don't know if you heard about it. Guys come in to play. Shawn can't make the taping, and I'd like for you to come down. Is that something you'd be interested in?" I calmly said, "Yeah, I'd be interested." Meanwhile, I was freaking out and pumping my fist on the other side of the phone. Coming in to sub for the show was awesome. I didn't expect it to lead to anything. I was just happy to be a part of it once.

But later that turned into subbing for Hall and Oates, when their drummer needed back surgery. So I was subbing for both the Hall and Oates gig and for *Live From Daryl's House*. I wound up playing about half the TV shows for about a year, and eventually I was given both gigs. It was pretty unbelievable.

T-Bone unfortunately passed away in 2010. The other current members of the *Live From Daryl's House* band are guitarist Shane Theriot, keyboard player Eliot Lewis, bass player Klyde Jones, and percussionist Porter Carroll. Eliot and Klyde were also bandmates of mine in the Average White Band.
MD: *Live From Daryl's House* started off as a webcast, correct?
Brian: There were no plans for this to be on TV, actually. It was just supposed to be a monthly show broadcast on the web. It was TV that came to Daryl. He wanted fans to see what happens when two artists get together and just play, and he wanted it to be super-loose. With Daryl, music is his life, but he's also a foodie. That's where the cooking section of the show comes in. I watched the show from the beginning and thought it was such a great idea. I never thought for a second that I would be part of it, though. It's funny how life works out.

FAVORITES

James Brown The Payback (John "Jabo" Starks) /// **Donny Hathaway** Live (Fred White) /// **Grace Jones** Slave to the Rhythm (William "Ju Ju" House) /// **John Scofield** Meant to Be (Bill Stewart)

MD: You play with so many different musicians on the show. What's your approach to playing all these styles?

Brian: Playing many styles of music when I was growing up really paid off for me, as the TV show definitely requires all the band members to capture lots of different feels. Each song dictates the vocabulary I use.

There's this ongoing discussion I hear all the time about how being a "pocket" drummer gets you hired. I think some players feel as though this means playing fewer fills. But I don't subscribe to that. I feel like it's the intent *behind* the fill that really matters. This is why simply deciding to play less won't necessarily cut it in a high-level musical situation. I think people can feel the intent, and that gets over far more than physical ability on any instrument. If you start out with the simple concepts of trying to serve the music—as in the gig you're playing, not the one you may *want* to be playing [laughs]—and listening to the other musicians around you at all times, things will usually take care of themselves. At that point, your own individual flavor that you add to something will automatically be coming from a deeper place.

Daryl also wants our version of a given tune to be different from the artist's usual version, while still honoring the original. There are no rehearsals prior to each show. We get MP3s about a week prior to the show, and we each do our own homework. There have been some times when we got the tunes only a couple of days before. Those are the shows where I will write myself some mental notes or a chart. Our guitar player writes charts for everybody. I don't like to rely on charts, though. When I start learning music with a chart, then I always kind of *need* that chart. It almost becomes a crutch; I feel safer if I have it. If I just use my ears and internalize the music, it seems to work better for me.

MD: So how does the band begin working

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up the tunes?

Brian: We basically talk through the form and play each song a few times, and then we're done. Sometimes changes happen on the fly from the artist, so if you have a chart you're going to be marking it up a lot. If I memorize it, then making these changes is easier. Daryl likes to move really fast, so if a take feels good even with some uneven spots, he says, "That felt good—next!" He's okay with rough edges or if the time gets a little weird here or there. He just wants it to feel good overall and have an "in the moment" energy, meaning not rehearsed-sounding.

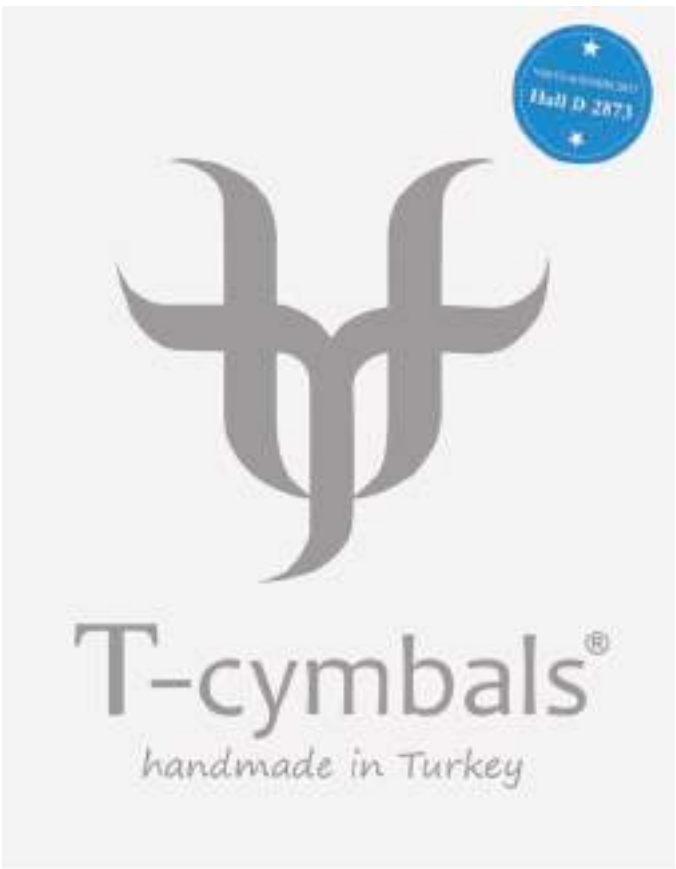
If an artist came in and said, "I want to do 'Maneater' as a cha-cha-cha," he'd be like, "Great, that's different, let's do that." [laughs] He likes when people mess with his stuff and make it new. We also don't listen back to what we did. I usually wind up hearing what I did on TV for the first time six months later. Daryl must be on to something, because he's done it his way and every year the show becomes more successful.

MD: Your drum sound on the show is very distinctive and consistent, with good separation given the background noise levels. Is this your sound, or Daryl's, or the sound engineer's…?

Brian: The sound engineer, Pete Moshay, is a huge part of that. He also worked on a lot of Hall and Oates records. The fact that he makes those *Live From Daryl's House* shows sound the way they do is fascinating to me. When we're in that room, man, it's really loud, with live drums and monitors blaring near live mics. It's an engineer's nightmare. It's chaos. It's pretty amazing what he does

RECORDING

Chuck Loeb In a Heartbeat ("Rhythm Ace/Funky Stuff"), When I'm With You (hidden track) /// **Mike Ricchiuti** The Way I See It ("Up All Night")" /// **CeeLo Green** Live From Daryl's House ("I Can't Go for That/No Can Do")



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for the show.

I have a Pro Tools rig at home, and I do a lot of work recording and sending drum files via the internet. One of the things I learned from Pete was this: I like my snare drum tuned up high—not just for the sound, but also because I like rebound. When I met Pete he was like, "Why don't you loosen up that snare a little bit?" Then, when I loosened it to where it was just a little bit uncomfortable for me, he said, "Now loosen it up a little bit more." [laughs] At the end of the day, it definitely sits better in the mix. But I'm still struggling with that. For certain music you want a really tight, crackin' snare, but that's not most of the music we play. A fatter-sounding snare seems more appropriate for the stuff we usually do. So you're right, the sound is very consistent with the same drums and the same engineer. Pete knows what he's doing!

MD: How is the Hall and Oates tour going?

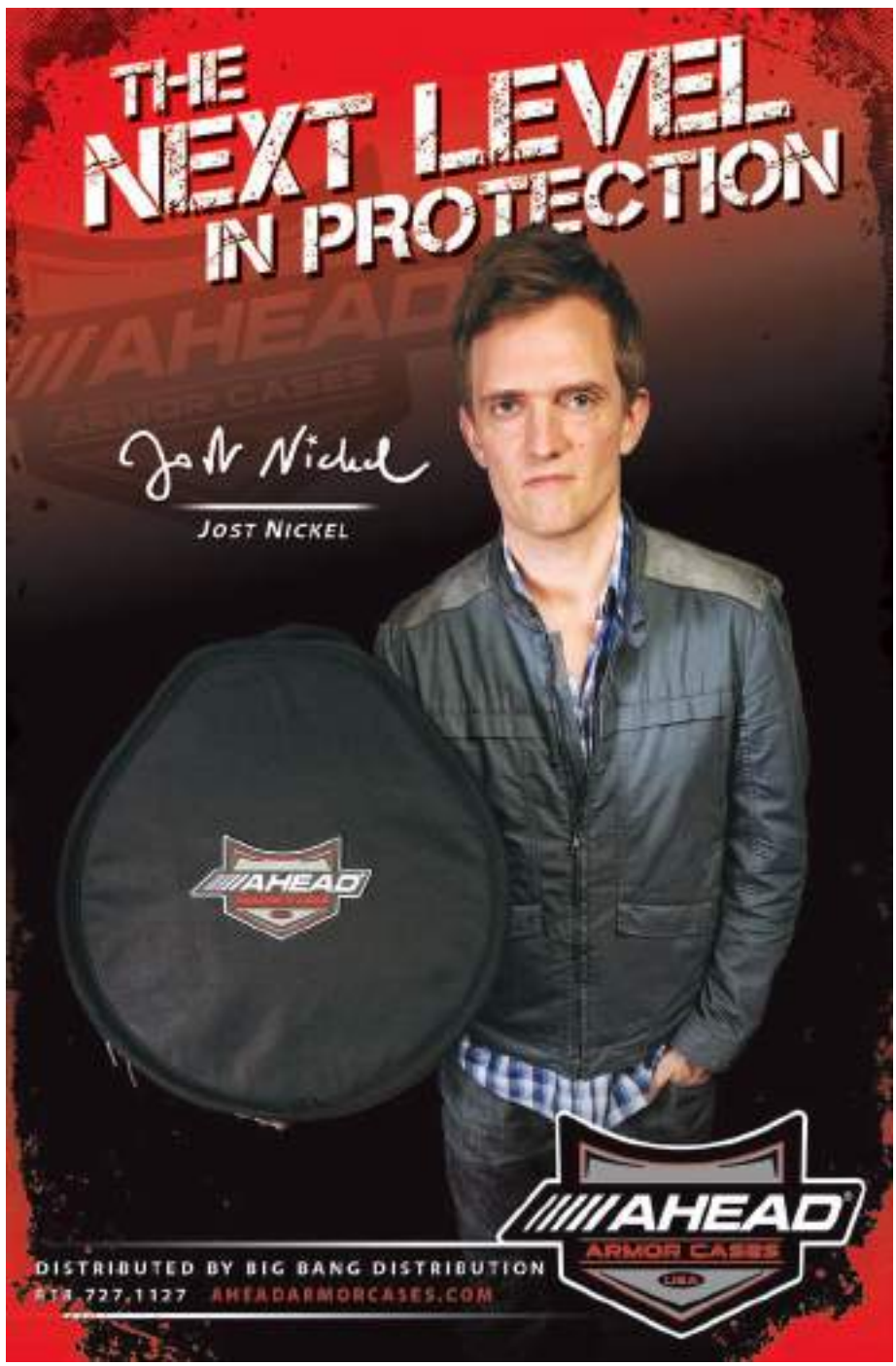
Brian: The shows are getting bigger and bigger. I don't know if it's because of Daryl's TV show or the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction, but they're getting more critical acclaim as well. We did Madison Square Garden last February, and it sold out really fast. I think many fans have been reintroduced to John and Daryl's music via *Live From Daryl's House*, so touring with these guys has been great. It's funny, I've had people tell me they heard that John and Daryl don't get along. Not so—those guys are like brothers. There's mutual respect and a long history of great music that they've created. They both have always had individual careers outside Hall and Oates.

MD: There's a picture of you and the band with President Obama and the first lady on your website. That must have been quite an experience.

Brian: Oh, man, it was so awesome. In February of 2015, we were invited by the president to play the Governors' Ball. They're fans of Hall and Oates. The staffers told us they were playing Hall and Oates songs in the White House the whole week before we came.

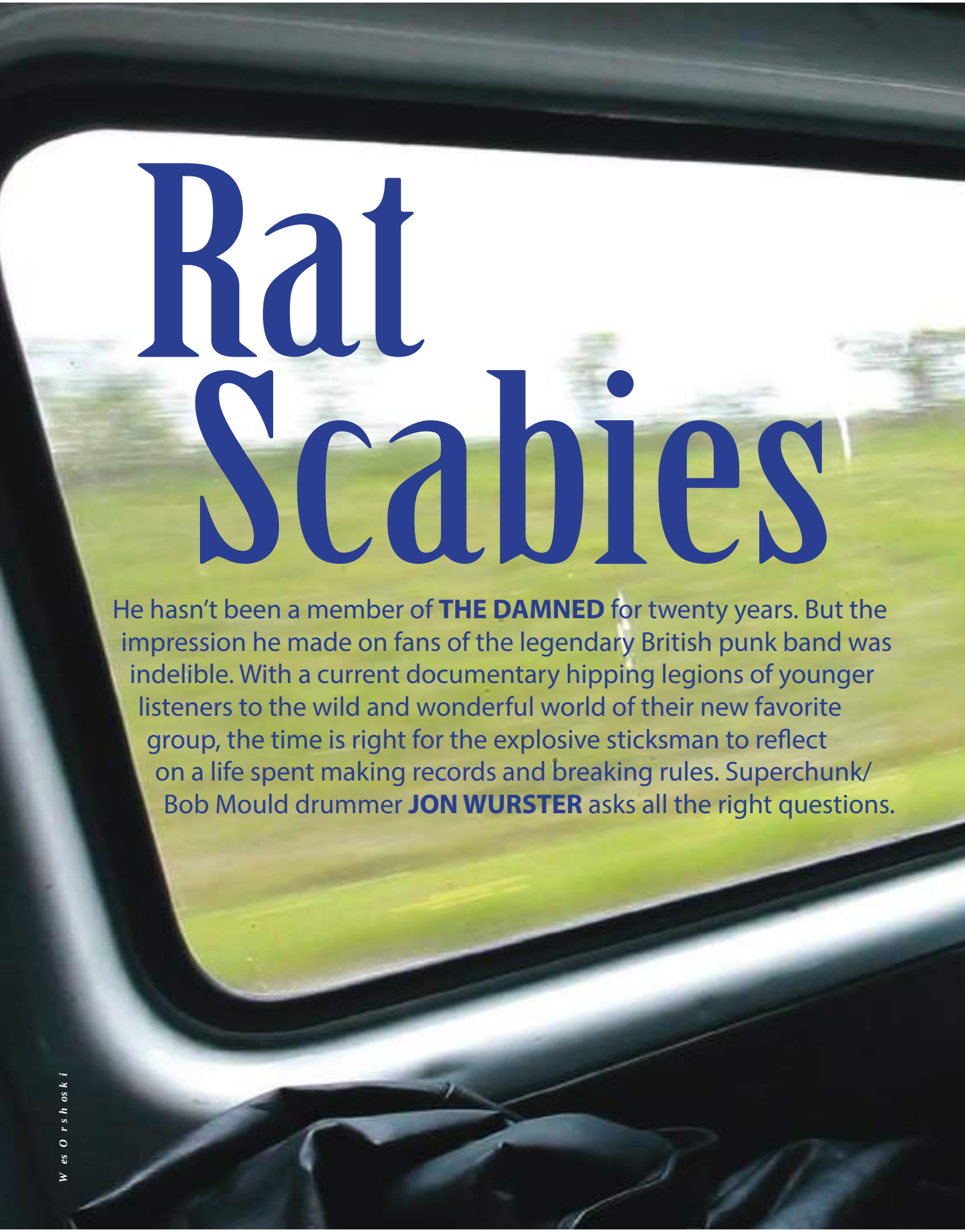
I was the first band member to meet the president after Daryl and John. I walked in the room, and he put his hand out and said, "Hey, Brian. Good to meet you, man. I'm so happy you could come here and play." I was so awestruck that I think I was freakin' babbling. I couldn't even say hi to him. I just shook his hand. The same thing with Michelle; she was so cool. They were singing along and knew all the words. When we stopped playing, the president said, "I want more!" Everybody started laughing. So we played two more tunes. It was an honor indeed. They took a picture with us, and it's now the screensaver on my phone.

I love what I do. Daryl Hall and John Oates have had remarkable careers and are two of the best people anyone can work for. The combination of the TV show and touring makes my job pretty amazing. I'm very, very lucky.



Rat Scabies

He hasn't been a member of **THE DAMNED** for twenty years. But the impression he made on fans of the legendary British punk band was indelible. With a current documentary hipping legions of younger listeners to the wild and wonderful world of their new favorite group, the time is right for the explosive sticksman to reflect on a life spent making records and breaking rules. Superchunk/Bob Mould drummer **JON WURSTER** asks all the right questions.



Wes Orshoski

"I never expected to end up in a band like the Damned," Rat Scabies laughs. "I thought I'd end up an orchestra pit player or on a cruise ship." Thankfully, Scabies (born Christopher Millar in Surrey, England) was spared the unspeakable polyester fate of tapping along to "You Light Up My Life" on a lido deck when he teamed up with guitarist Brian James, bassist Ray "Captain Sensible" Burns, and vocalist Dave Vanian to form the Damned in 1976.

Though best known for snarling punk anthems like "Neat Neat Neat," "New Rose," and "Love Song," the Damned blossomed into an unpredictable, highly adventurous band in the 1980s, often touching on psychedelia, Motown, goth, and even progressive rock while always retaining its aggressive, sometimes sinister edge. Scabies played a crucial role in the group's evolution, not just as the rhythmic powerhouse but also as a songwriting partner and coproducer on classic albums like *Machine Gun Etiquette*, *The Black Album*, and *Strawberries*. Though he left the Damned permanently in 1996, Scabies has remained active, and he still has plenty to say about his time behind the kit in one of modern rock's most influential and important bands.

MD: I came across a great quote of yours that goes, "I would never have been anything but a drummer, no matter what I did."
Rat: Yeah, there was never going to be anything else that I was going to do or that I wanted to be.
MD: No plan B?
Rat: No. I think you have a much higher chance of getting what you want if you don't leave yourself other options. You have to burn the bridges. If I ever audition people to play with me, I ask them the same question: "When you told your parents you wanted to be a musician and they said, 'That's really nice but you'll need a *proper* job to choose,' what job did you choose?" If they'd chosen a job, then I put the phone down. Because the people who said, "There was no choice—I was only going to do this" are the greatest players.
MD: English jazz drummer/bandleader Eric Delaney was one of your early influences. What was it about him that made such an impression on you?
Rat: He was *the* style drummer. He was the only drummer who was on TV, and he was a real showman: two bass drums and lights inside the drums. His style was really pop, but the fact that he was saying, Okay, you can lead a whole band with the drums and sound great doing it, that was a jaw-dropping moment for me.
MD: You started drumming very young. You were eight?
Rat: Yeah, that's when I first fell in love with it and demanded a drumkit for Christmas, which was the classic toy drumkit that lasted a few hours. [laughs] But two or three years later I got a real kit because [the desire] just hadn't gone away.
MD: What were your early experiences playing with other musicians?
Rat: A friend's father used to run a theater company. He had this pantomime going on, and he needed musicians. So he gave me a job. It was one of the best things to ever happen to me. I had to play quietly because I was playing with an acoustic piano. I had to learn about control and how to dampen the drumkit with big ol' bits of felt on the toms without it sounding too horrible. And it was a show every day, with matinees, and I was doing three solos a show. It was just real good for my playing.

But I was really dying to play properly on a loud kit. And then I went down and jammed with Brian James. So I had eight weeks of restraint and learning how to get on with other players, and suddenly there I was with Brian, who of course is "the louder the better."
MD: So you had a leg up on most of the other punk drummers in terms of actual on-the-job experience.
Rat: Yeah, I think a lot of the punk drummers picked up the sticks the day of their first show and sorted themselves that way, which was really good. But I'd already made my mind up, so I was already playing.
MD: When the Damned was starting, were you aware of drummers like the MC5's Dennis Thompson, Tommy Ramone, or the Stooges' Scott Asheton?
Rat: Yes. Dennis Thompson, very much so. Such a cool player, that trick he does with his snare drum rolls where they're kind of ahead and they snap off and then he sits right back in the pocket.
MD: You have this wonderful "Who wants to come up and knock me off this drum stool?" expression on your face in a lot of the early Damned footage. What do you think accounted for that confidence?
Rat: Oh, I was *terrified*. But I knew if I let that fear of being on stage take over, I'd never be able to do it. So I would just shut off the fact that the audience was there. But then you get used to that and you go, *You know what? They're all watching, so I think I'll show off so they'll notice me properly.* Everyone in the Damned thought they were the best one in the Damned, and that we'd be able to have a massive career on our own without the other three. So you wanted to stand out the most.
MD: The Damned has always been tagged as a punk band, but you touched on so many different genres. How important was not being pigeonholed into one specific sound or style?
Rat: The important thing about being a musician to me was that you didn't stay doing the same thing; otherwise it's like doing a job in a factory. So we weren't afraid to experiment with our own music.
MD: The experimenting really kicked in when Brian James left in 1978 and Captain Sensible switched from bass to guitar.
Rat: Yeah. We didn't have any writing background between us, because Brian had written the first record. Apart from a song each on the second album, we'd never done it before. So we'd go and troll through record stores, picking up old obscure albums because you liked the way the band looked or the name, and then you listened to it and it opened up new ways you could go.

The original Damned lineup: Vanian, Sensible, Scabies, James
Ian Dickson

There's nothing better than switching instruments to bring something new out. The intro to "Smash It Up" was me sitting there with the guitar and seeing what I could do.
MD: I found that once I learned how to play the guitar and strummed along with records, it really made me a better drummer. It made me understand what helps or hinders the momentum of a song.
Rat: Yeah, and having an empathy with where it should be slightly slower or have a pause, or when it needs a lift to get more exciting. And if you don't have an empathy with the rest of the band, you can't do that. The hardest lesson learned is to listen to the rest of the band rather than yourself.
MD: This might sound odd, but I've always thought of your style as an unlikely cross between Keith Moon and Hal Blaine.
Rat: [laughs] Hal Blaine I'm not so sure about. But the Moon thing: I think it's the "mad drummer in the back trying to draw attention to himself." Do you know what I mean?
MD: Yeah, but I think you had the flashiness *and* that empathy that kept you from getting in the way of the song.
Rat: Well, there's a real easy rule for that: When there's singing, *don't drum.* [laughs]
MD: There's a noticeable evolution in your playing from 1979's *Machine Gun Etiquette* to 1982's *Strawberries*.

Rat Scabies uses **Aquarian** heads and **Vater** sticks.

Rat: Well, one of the things was the arrival of the drum machine. That changed the game a lot. Captain would be up all night in the studio writing with a drum machine. I'd come down in the morning and there'd be a guitar track with a drum machine, and it would need drums. So I had to learn that discipline pretty quickly. It changes the way you approach things. Instead of going for that big bluff roll where you go "brrrrrllllldddddd" and end hopefully in the right place, you can't really get away with it, because you've got the metronome ticking.

MD: That said, you *are* the master of those super-fast, around-the-kit, multi-tom rolls. Was that something that came naturally, or did you have to work at it?

Rat: That came from playing on my own a lot and getting off on the sound of the toms. They sound *great*. [laughs] Why don't people use them more?

MD: You were one of the few drummers from the '76/'77 punk era who used a larger kit. Did you ever get any negative comments for that?

Rat: No. I actually used to always rate a band by how many tom-toms the drummer had. [laughs] The first album was done on a five-piece kit, and I pretty much stuck with that setup, but I got an extra bass drum for a while because I liked how it looked. But I never really got on with it. And I realized that if you could do fancy stuff with your right foot but you had two bass drums, nobody would realize you could do it with one foot.

MD: From *Damned Damned Damned* to your final album with the band, 1996's *Not of This Earth*, your drums—specifically the snare—have an exciting "snap" to them. Obviously a lot of that is down to you as a player, but did you have specific methods for tuning your drums?

Rat: Well, first of all, I only do rimshots, so that has a lot to do with it. There's got to be a certain amount of response to the heads; I like the sticks to bounce back. A lot of studio playing is about detuning, and one of the great things about [*Music for Pleasure* producer and Pink Floyd drummer] Nick Mason and [*Damned Damned Damned* producer] Nick Lowe was that they let me have my own way with how the drums sounded.

MD: Damned songs have so many peaks and valleys. There are some songs, specifically the seventeen-minute opus "Curtin Call," from 1980's *The Black Album*, where you lay out completely for long stretches.

Rat: I think silence is quite a powerful thing, and I think to nail those stops and gaps is a very natural thing to do as well. It keeps you interested.

MD: In the studio, would you do a lot of takes of a song, or were you pretty quick with your drum tracks?

Rat: It depends on what stage we were in. The first album was done in a couple days. The second one [1977's *Music for Pleasure*], was a little longer but not that much. When we got to [1985's] *Phantasmagoria* and working with [producer] Jon Kelly, it became a different ballgame. Like I said, the drum machine had arrived and everybody's perception of what you did was different. So with Jon we did a lot of takes. And I'd be sitting there going, "Come *on*, we've done three takes—how many more of this?" But he was real good. The best producers always understand the feel you have with the track. It's not just about being in time, it's about how well you lock in all the way through.

MD: Was it at all nerve-racking working with the drummer of one of the biggest bands in the world when you were making *Music for Pleasure*?

Rat: No, I never felt intimidated by him as a player. What Nick Mason did [in Pink Floyd] was always good and tasteful in the right places. He was always really cool, and I think he understood where I was coming from and what I was doing.

MD: Speaking of English rock royalty, Led Zeppelin once came to see the Damned at the Roxy in London. What do you remember about that night?

Rat: It was a bit odd, because on the one hand we were these snotty kids going, "F**kin' old hippies coming down trying to crash in on our scene." And on the other hand you're thinking, *That's Led Zeppelin, one of the biggest bands in the world, and they've come down to see US.*

MD: Fast-forward several years, and you find yourself in a rehearsal room playing with Jimmy Page. That must've been surreal.

Rat: Yeah. It must've been around '84. He was a big Damned fan, and I got a phone call asking if I wanted to come down and jam. So I went down there and it was a really cool thing to do. I think he just felt like playing again.

MD: A few years ago you and Brian James teamed up to perform *Damned Damned Damned* in its entirety. What was it like playing those songs again after so many years?

Rat: To play them with that same kind of energy after all that time, I found demanding. I'm sixty-one this year; I ain't eighteen anymore. People come to see you play and they've been listening to those records for forty years and they know exactly how it should be done. And if it's not quite as fast as it should be or if you fluff going into the middle section, I think it does matter to the audience.

MD: You've experienced something very few people get to do: watch a condensed, warts-and-all depiction of your life on the silver screen. How strange was it seeing Wes Orshoski's Damned documentary, *Don't You Wish That We Were Dead*, for the first time?

Rat: It's Wes's movie, his viewpoint. It's someone else's perception of what you did. Which of course you're not going to agree with completely. But I think the film put a pleasant full stop on the whole thing. It's something for my grandchildren to look at and go, "Yup, there he is."

MD: What's going on now? What are you working on?

Rat: I've just finished a run in the theater with an actress named Jane Horrocks. That was twelve weeks of theatrical work, which was really good fun because I didn't have to break a kit down every night and travel 200 miles every day. I really enjoyed not being on the road, and playing the same venue every night. And I've been recording with a band called the Mutants. We've done three and a half albums now. We have a new album that we kind of coproduced with the Dandy Warhols. And we may be going back to America to do some shows on the West Coast. We did the last album in Joshua Tree with [Eagles of Death Metal guitarist] Dave Catching and some of those desert people. [laughs]

MD: How did you hook up with them?

Rat: Well, I really like the Eagles of Death Metal. When I first heard them I sent Dave an email saying, "I really like your band. Let me join it." So he invited me down to Joshua Tree to hang out at the studio for a while, and I did. We became pretty good friends and I'd go down and see them [in the U.K.]. They'd play "New Rose" and I'd hang out and drink the rider. [laughs]

MD: You've been involved in so many firsts: first U.K. punk band to release a single, put out an album, tour the U.S., etc. What are you personally most proud of?

Rat: [long pause] It's funny, I always try to remind people that we didn't have a clue what we were doing. None of us knew it would turn into something bigger at the time. And I think people who are influenced by us should bear that in mind, that there aren't any rules. It's not about being just like someone else; it's about doing your own thing.

But what I'm proudest of? It's a bit weird—I'd be at a party and someone would ask, "What do you do for a living?" and I'd say, "I'm a drummer." And they'd always look at you in disbelief. I think being able to say "I'm a drummer" at all those parties is pretty satisfying. [laughs]

GEARING UP *ON STAGE AND UP CLOSE*

Carrie Underwood's Garrett Goodwin

Interview by John Martinez
Photos by Alex Solca

Drums: DW Collector's Series drums in Matte Black finish with black-nickel hardware and black Tuner Fish lug locks
A. 4x14 A&F Drum Co. Raw Brass snare with leather washers and PureSound Super 30 wires
B. 10x14 floor tom
C. 16x18 floor tom
D. 5.5x14 Beier snare with PureSound Super 30 wires and BFSD "Steve's Donut" mute
E. 18x26 bass drum with KBrakes anchors

Cymbals: Sabian
1. 18" hi-hats (HHX X-Plosion crash top and Artisan crash bottom)
2. 24" AA Medium crash
3. 24" AAX Stage ride
4. 22" AA Medium crash

Electronics: Roland SPD-SX multi-pad and JH Audio Siren Series "Roxanne" in-ear monitors

Heads: Remo Coated CS Black Dot on top of A&F snare with Ambassador Hazy resonant, Coated Powerstroke 3 on top of Beier snare and Ambassador Hazy resonant, Black Suede Emperor tom batters and Clear Ambassador resonants (Drumtacs dampeners applied to underside of batter heads), and Coated Powerstroke 4 bass drum batter and a custom front head

Hardware: DW 5000 series hi-hat stand, 5000 series bass drum pedal with Low Boy leather-faced beaters, 9000 series cymbal stands (no wing nuts), 9000 series snare stand with vertical post cut down, DW throne, SwirlyShtick stick holder

Sticks: Promark 2S Natural with tennis racket tape and Hot Rods

***MD* caught up with Goodwin** to talk about his unique drumset. "Growing up, I never geeked out on drummers too much," he says. "But Abe Laboriel Jr. was an influence, in the sense of using big drums, big cymbals, and a pretty simple setup."

The A&F snare is used for songs such as "Dirty Laundry" and "Little Toy Guns." "It's pretty unreal," Goodwin says of the relatively shallow drum. "I've always been into deep snares, but for whatever reason this snare sits perfectly. I can tune it down pretty low, despite how thin it is. I like to have a crack but I also like to have the body. When I hit the snare, I want the stick to sink in a little bit." Goodwin says he tunes the batter head no more than two turns above finger-tight, but the bottom head is cranked as high as possible. The Beier snare is used more during the second half of the show, on songs like "Last Name," and it has a Big Fat Snare Drum dampener on top.

"I love big drums and giant sounds, so the two floor toms work for me," says Goodwin, who adds that both are tuned low, with the bottom heads slightly higher than the top. Garrett also explains that the toms are positioned far apart to keep him from over-playing. Regarding his kick, the drummer reports that its batter head is tuned just above finger-tight, and the front head is cranked. In addition, there's a DW pillow and a couple of rolled towels placed inside.

"I also love big cymbals," Goodwin continues. "I don't always use them in a studio setting, but when you're playing arenas and stadiums, big drums and cymbals speak very well. They linger, so they don't die out in an instant. And they make me play in a way to give space."

Garrett tilts his snare and toms away from him, and they are positioned very low. "Growing up, I only took one drum lesson," Goodwin says. "And when I went in the second week, the instructor said, 'You'll never be a drummer, so don't bother coming back.' I had never picked up drumsticks in my life before that, so I didn't have anyone sit me down and say, 'This is how you're supposed to hold your sticks and set up your drums.' I don't slouch over the drums, but from my waist up, I kind of tilt over the drums. When I'm playing, they feel pretty flat to me. But when I get up and look at the kit, it looks like it's about to fall over. Some people think I'm trying to do something weird or cool, but it's one-hundred-percent comfortable for me. If I tilt the snare flat towards me, it doesn't feel right."

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2
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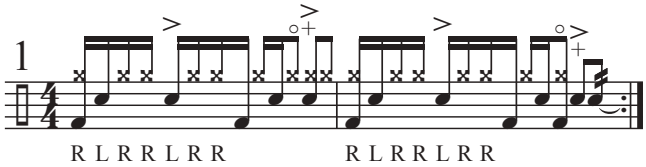
C
D
E

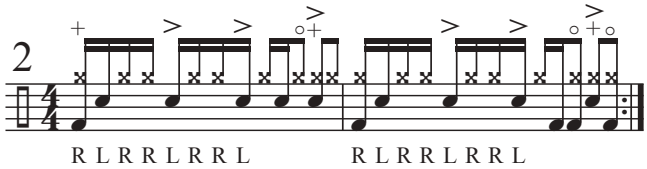
Stickings That Rock

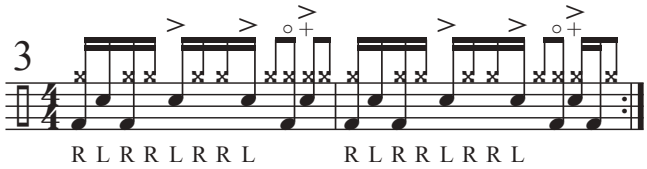
Part 1: From a Hand Pattern to a Groove

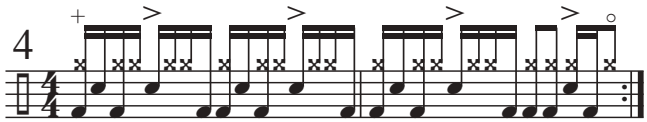
by Rich Redmond

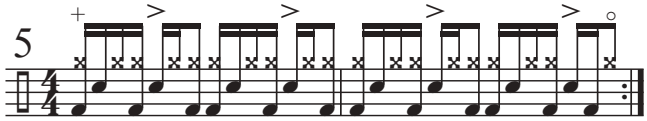
This month we'll look at a sticking that can be found in the first few pages of George Lawrence Stones' book *Stick Control* and apply it to patterns on the drumset. The sticking, RLRR LRRL, is a staple of my drumming vocabulary. Be sure to clearly articulate the difference in dynamics between the accented and unaccented notes—it makes a huge difference and is the key to making this sticking feel great. The grooves here start simply before taking on a linear feel as the lesson progresses. At their heart, these patterns are practical and can be used to get audiences dancing and telling stories. That's what drumming is all about, so get busy and get rockin'!

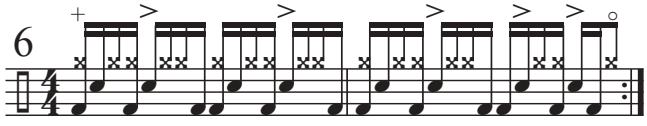


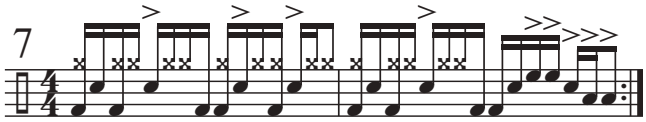


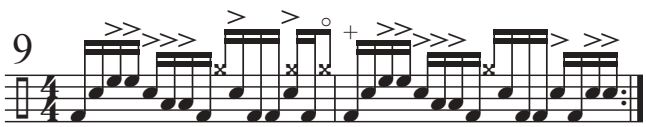


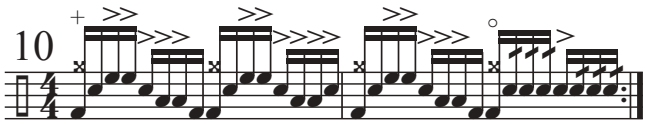


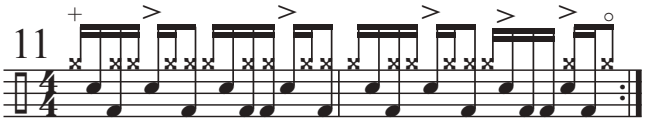


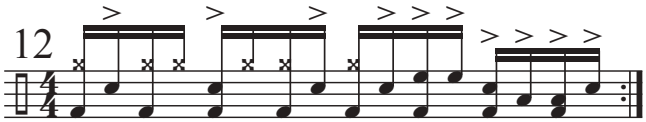












Rich Redmond drums for country star Jason Aldean, is an award-winning clinician, and is an active session drummer in Nashville and Los Angeles. His recent book/DVD, *FUNdamentals of Drumming for Kids* (coauthored with Michael Aubrecht), is available through Modern Drummer Publications.

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SHARING PASSION & PERFORMANCE

Twelve Essential Shuffles

Some of Drumming's Most Influential Feels

by Rich Scannella

While simple in concept, the shuffle, which features prominently in early jazz, blues, Motown, soul, funk, rock 'n' roll, and hip-hop, among other styles, can be difficult to execute even for skilled drummers. In this article we'll cover the essential shuffle variations by examining some of the most influential tracks ever recorded.

The Grooves

On "Green Onions," from Booker T and the MG's' 1962 album of the same name, Al Jackson Jr. utilizes a quarter-note feel while shuffling the bass drum on the "a" of beat 2. The hi-hat foot on beats 2 and 4 continues throughout the song, while the right hand plays quarter notes on the ride and the left hand plays backbeats. It's a surprisingly economical use of notes and a deceptively brilliant groove.

It's difficult to choose only one track featuring Bernard Purdie's patented half-time shuffle; there are many classic examples. In fact, the feel is so closely associated with Bernard, and has inspired so many drummers, it's been dubbed the "Purdie Shuffle." "Home at Last" has been a fan favorite since 1977, when it appeared on Steely Dan's *Aja* album. Absent in this example is the heavy, driving feel common to shuffles; rather, it features a laid-back, funky feel that's more reminiscent of an R&B or soul vibe. While Purdie shuffles his right hand on the hi-hat, he plays ghost notes on the snare with a strong backbeat, providing balance on beat 3. Purdie also drops in open hi-hat notes on triplet upbeats, leading smoothly into the pre-chorus of the song.

Richard Allen's mid-tempo groove carries Martha Reeves and the Vandellas' 1967 hit "Jimmy Mack." Note the four-on-the-floor feel, which lays the foundation for many of the dance-oriented Motown tracks of this era. Allen's dotted-8th and 16th-note hi-hat pattern and snare backbeats propel the song beautifully. Also note the familiar Motown quarter-note handclaps and foot stomps, which add to this song's driving dance feel.

Willie Dixon's "The Seventh Son" features this classic Chicago shuffle played by Clifton James. James' hands mirror each other on this dotted-8th and 16th-note feel. Notice how the subtly accented backbeats don't weigh down the groove.

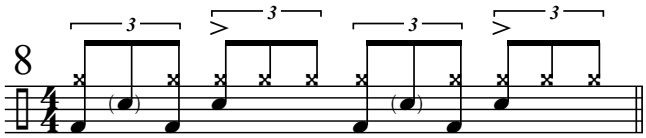
Motown great Benny Benjamin's Chicago shuffle is a highlight of the John Lee Hooker track "Boom Boom" off 1962's *Burnin'* album. Each verse's beginning features quarter-note ensemble hits before Benjamin kicks into a swinging shuffle that relies on more of a traditional jazz cymbal pattern.

When rock 'n' roll was still in its infancy, many of the early drummers who played the style had a background in jazz. Fred Below was one such player, evident in his wonderfully light touch and flowing brush feel throughout Little Walter's 1955 track "My Babe."

Both hands on snare w/ brushes:

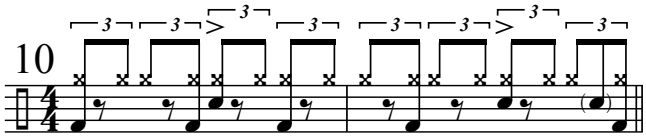
John Bonham's towering take on the Purdie shuffle lies at the heart of the Led Zeppelin hit "Fool in the Rain," from the 1979 album *In Through the Out Door*. Note the subtle funk feel, which was prevalent in much of Bonham's playing. Bonzo beautifully juxtaposes powerful backbeats against ghost notes on this famous track; his hi-hat openings on the third triplet partial of beat 1 offer further movement.

Guyana-born drummer Richard Bailey opens Jeff Beck's "Freeway Jam" (from the 1975 album *Blow by Blow*) with a precise snare lead-in before transitioning to the shuffle that sets the pace for the entire song. Bailey predominantly uses triplet patterns on the bass drum, snare, and hi-hats, as was common in other '70s-era rock shuffles. Also of note is his use of dynamics between ghost notes and accents.



On Bad Company's "Can't Get Enough," Simon Kirke plays driving hi-hat quarter notes while anchoring the kick drum groove with shuffled notes on beats 1 and 3. The snare holds down the backbeat on 2 and 4. Note how effortlessly Simon's triplet fills flow out of the swing-like groove.

Session great Jeff Porcaro wrote his own chapter on the half-time shuffle with his performance on the hit "Rosanna" from Toto's 1982 album, *Toto IV*. While Porcaro plays the shuffle throughout the verses, the pre-chorus features a much lower dynamic and a subtle two-beat feel. All of this sets up the dramatic stops that lead into each chorus. Also check out Jeff's syncopated snare hits behind Steve Lukather's guitar solo at the song's fade.



Superstar multi-instrumentalist Stevie Wonder handled the drums on many of his own songs, including "Higher Ground" from 1973's *Innervisions*. Stevie's shuffling hi-hat drives the backbeats on 2 and 4 on this classic track. The groove is a great example of how funky a shuffle can be.

Although many artists have covered Howlin Wolf's 1962 classic "Spoonful" (composed by Willie Dixon), few drummers have come close to achieving the deep pocket of Fred Below's original groove. As the bass drum anchors beats 1 and 3, Below's unvarying closed hi-hat shuffle provides a constant element that the vocal melody plays off of as the song moves from verse to chorus.

Rich Scannella is the drummer for Jon Bon Jovi and the Kings of Suburbia, has performed with Bruce Springsteen, Bon Jovi, and Lady Gaga, and is an adjunct professor at Rider University in New Jersey. He can be reached at richscannella.com.

Beyond the Noteheads

Benefits and Strategies for Transcribing, Part 2

by Steve Fidyk

I lead a lab at Temple University, and at our first meeting of each semester I ask my students what music they have an interest in learning more about. Some want to gain a deeper understanding of a particular style of playing, while others want to explore specific drummers like Philly Joe Jones or Max Roach. I've personally found transcribing to be worthwhile in helping these students understand how the drumset functions within a musical context. On paper, a student can clearly see the rhythmic information from specific phrases, which can lead to a greater understanding of why the figures were played in the first place.

From this perspective, transcription can serve as a tool to develop a time feel for the music you're studying, a better understanding of musical form, and a sense of the composition's phrasing, articulation, and dynamics. Through the process of transcribing, a student's dictation, reading, and critical listening skills can greatly improve.

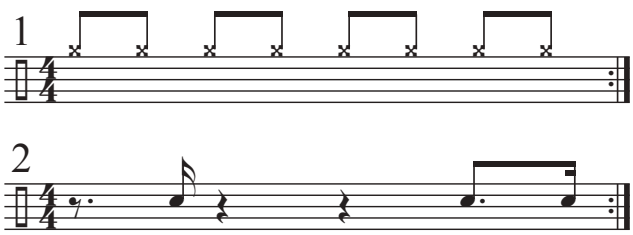
Tools for the Job

The following tools can help your transcribing endeavors:

- Plenty of pencils, erasers, and manuscript paper.
- Quality headphones—I prefer noise-canceling models.
- Software, such as Amazing Slow Downer or Transcribe!, which can slow down audio, change the music's key, and identify notes and chords.

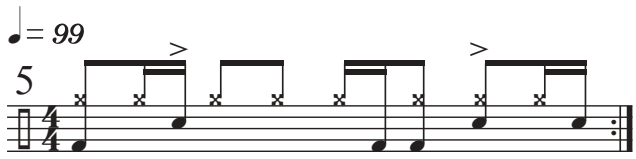
Patience is key to getting the information down on paper as accurately as possible. It's also important to note that some phrases that you attempt to transcribe—perhaps a solo idea from Elvin Jones or Jack DeJohnette—may defy traditional notation. Keep in mind that this is your interpretation of that particular phrase. I'm always looking for the effort that is put forth by my students. We each may hear a phrase differently, and that's okay. What's important is that students move forward and incorporate the transcribed phrases within the music that they're playing as they learn more about rhythm. When practicing, some transcribed phrases may feel unorthodox, which is okay too. Practicing is a process of working through challenging material step by step.

Once you've selected a phrase to transcribe, listen to it carefully and notate what each limb is playing. For example, let's have a look at the initial groove Harvey Mason plays on the classic funk anthem "Chameleon" off Herbie Hancock's 1973 album *Head Hunters*. Here's a rhythmic breakdown of each limb.



And here's each rhythm combined to create one composite phrase.

Take this newly transcribed single-line rhythm and read along on a snare drum or practice pad as you listen to the recording to ensure that it's accurate.

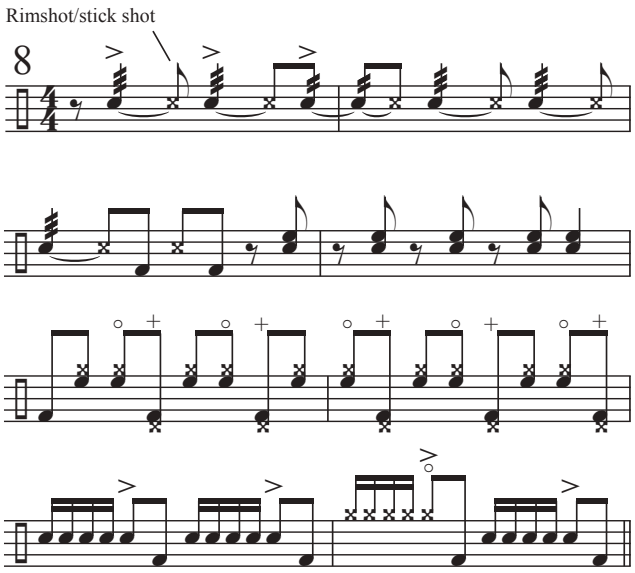


Here are three eight-measure phrases from jazz greats Roy Haynes, Jimmy Cobb, and Alan Dawson for transcription practice. These are some of my favorite phrases from my personal collection of transcriptions. Listen to these phrases and try to write them out before checking what's notated here, and then compare the provided transcription with what you've come up with.

Roy Haynes on "Snap Crackle"
Roy Haynes Quartet, *Out of the Afternoon*
@00:02 /// 170 bpm

Jimmy Cobb on "Softly, As in a Morning Sunrise"
Miles Davis, *In Person: Saturday Night at the Blackhawk*
@05:54 /// 188 bpm

Alan Dawson with Bill Evans on "Beautiful Love"
Various Artists, *Berlin Jazz Piano Workshop 1965* DVD
@02:42 /// 220 bpm



In Part 3 of this series we'll break down each solo phrase and come up with variations on each for practice.

Steve Fidyk has performed with Terell Stafford, Tim Warfield, Dick Oatts, Doc Severinsen, Wayne Bergeron, Phil Wilson, and Maureen McGovern, and he's a member of the jazz studies faculty at Temple University in Philadelphia. For more info, including how to sign up for lessons via Skype, visit stevefidyk.com.

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1,000 Ways to Practice a Single Page

Part 1: Introducing the Method

by Libor Hadrava

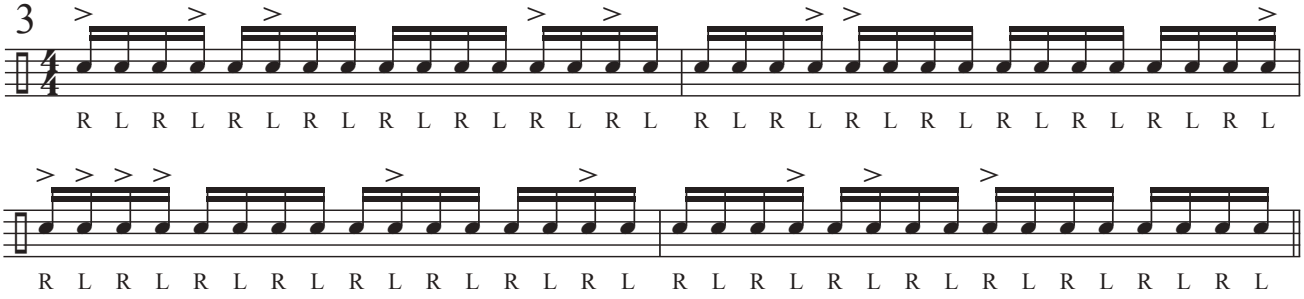
I've always wanted a system for practicing different subjects that I can take with me anywhere without having to lug around a heavy stack of books. My students often forgot materials for their lessons, so we ended up using any written rhythms that I could find to work from. I applied the rhythms to whatever that particular student was supposed to practice, and it didn't take long to realize that concepts such as snare or bass drum technique, rudiments, independence, counting, odd time signatures, phrasing, and more could be practiced from just one page. I started collecting these applications, and I now have more than one thousand different ways to practice a single sheet of music. In this lesson I'll share some of my ideas, variations, and approaches. Let's take a look at the page of rhythm we'll be using.

Let's start on a snare drum or practice pad. We'll play straight 16th notes while reading the rhythm from the page as accents. As we read through the figures, we'll accent the corresponding notes inside the flow of 16th notes. Here's the rhythm we'll use.

2

And here's how to apply the figures to 16th notes.

3


R L R L R L

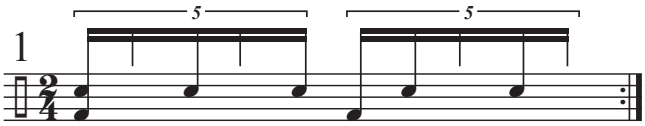
Five and Seven Over Two

Exploring Odd Polyrhythms

by Aaron Edgar

The key to internalizing any polyrhythm is to feel how the rhythm interacts with the pulse. In its most basic form, we can build a five-over-two polyrhythm by playing every other quintuplet partial over two beats. This is demonstrated in Exercise 1 with counts written below the notation. Be sure to count out loud, and play your bass drum on the "ta" of each beat. The goal is to play consistent quarter notes with your bass drum—they shouldn't feel like offbeats. Starting on beat 1, play every second quintuplet partial with your right hand while keeping an even spacing throughout the five-note grouping. "Ka" in beat 2 should feel almost like a slightly rushed offbeat 16th note.

1



Ta ka din ah gah ta ka din ah gah

When the rhythm is internalized, try playing a few different sticking patterns over Exercise 1. Try singles, doubles, and then paradiddles. The goal is to make the rhythm solid and consistent regardless of the sticking.

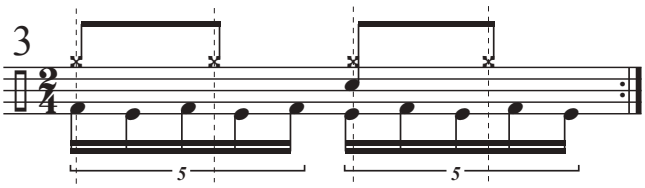
Exercise 2 demonstrates a basic version of a seven-over-two polyrhythm. Starting on beat 1, play every other septuplet partial over two beats. Use the same steps from the previous exercise to practice this example. Count out loud, and play solid quarter notes with your bass drum on the "ta" of each beat. The snare drum plays seven evenly spaced notes across the bar, and the "ka" on beat 2 should feel like an offbeat. If the second "ka" starts to feel like a downbeat, slow down and focus on counting.

2

Ta ka din ah ge na gah ta ka din ah ge na gah

Once you've internalized these rhythms, try thinking of them as quintuplets and septuplets over an 8th-note subdivision. Exercises 3 and 4 demonstrate a fun double bass application with each polyrhythm.

3



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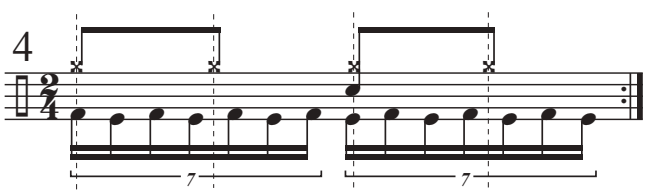


I find that the most enjoyable way to work on internalizing any polyrhythm is to apply it to a groove. If you alternate quarter notes between the bass drum and snare while layering a polyrhythm over it, you can naturally reinforce the pulse. The grooves in Exercises 5 and 6 are created from five-over-two and seven-over-two polyrhythms. Things get especially interesting when you start the polyrhythm on the subdivision's second partial, as demonstrated in Exercises 7 and 8.

5

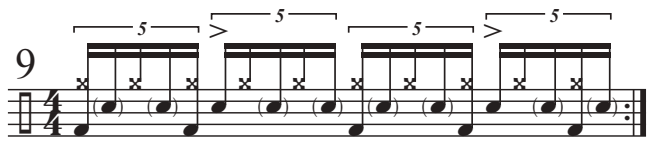
6

7

8

In Exercise 9, we'll start the five-over-two groove on the downbeat while filling in the spaces with ghost notes and embellishing the bass drum pattern.

9



In Exercise 10, we'll play an offbeat five-over-two groove with the right hand alternating between a cymbal stack and the hi-hats, and we'll place the last note of the pattern

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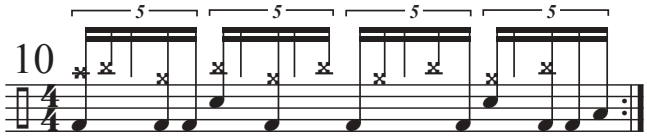
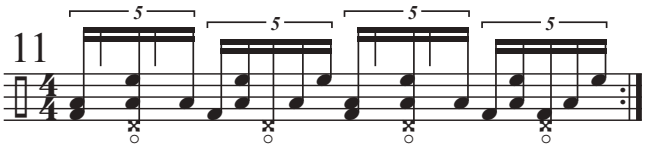
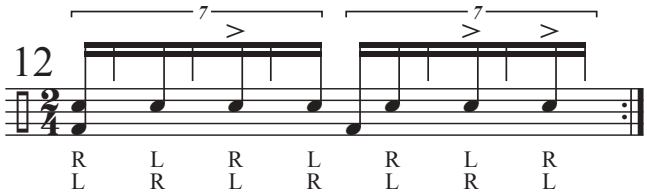
on the floor tom. At first, try keeping your right hand on a single sound source while practicing. Add the right-hand orchestration once you've gotten the hang of the groove.



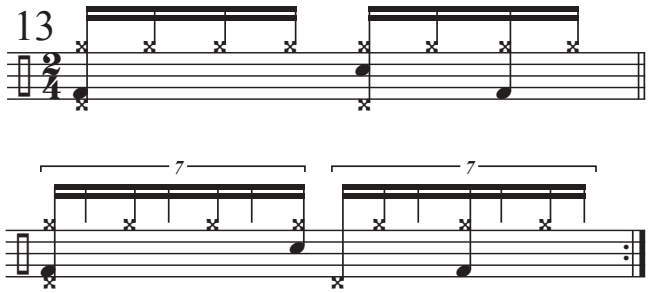
The last quintuplet example phrases a five-over-two polyrhythm on the toms. Your right hand plays ten evenly spaced notes on the floor tom while your left hand adds accents on the rack tom. Pay special attention to the hi-hat foot splashes on the "din" of each beat.



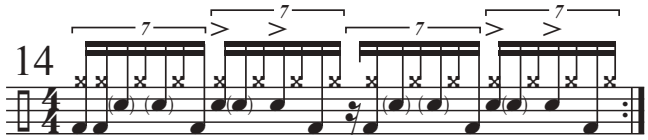
Exercise 12 demonstrates a septuplet polyrhythm groove that I call the Twisted Train. Those of you familiar with a train beat may recognize this pattern's inspiration. Be careful of the sticking, as it will be reversed on each repeat.



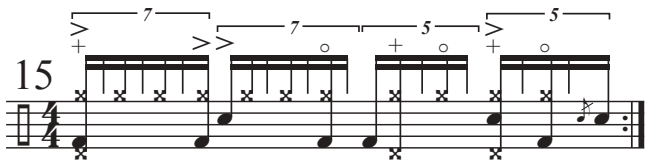
A seven-over-two polyrhythm has a very unusual feel. We can use this to our advantage to build an angular variation of a 16th-note groove. In Exercise 13 we'll apply a seven-over-two polyrhythm as a contrasting rhythm to a typical 16th-note hi-hat groove. Alternate between these two feels once you've internalized the septuplet variation.



Exercise 14 embellishes a seven-over-two groove by starting the hi-hat pattern on the offbeat. Pay close attention to the rest on the beginning of beat 3. The spacing of the rest will be easier to perceive if you focus on playing straight and consistent notes with your right hand. Try to use big motions and stiffer arms when first trying this exercise; it can help keep the pattern consistent.



This last exercise combines two of the feels we've worked on into a challenging groove with some fun and nasty hi-hat openings. The first half of this beat is a seven-over-two polyrhythm that starts on the downbeat, while the second half is a five-over-two polyrhythm that begins on the offbeat. At first, try starting with either the first or second half of the beat. Count out loud with your metronome and get comfortable with the hi-hat pattern without worrying about accents yet. Once that's down, add in the rest of the beat. Lastly, add the hi-hat accents and openings. Pay special attention to the hi-hat closing on the second partial of the quintuplet on beat 3.



Once you're comfortable with these grooves, go back and create some of your own patterns using Exercises 5 through 8 as a framework. Exploring your own creativity is one of the most enjoyable aspects of learning new rhythms. The offbeat five-over-two hi-hat pattern from Exercise 7 is one of my favorite ways to phrase polyrhythms in a groove. Have fun!

Aaron Edgar plays with the Canadian prog-metal band Third Ion and is a session drummer, clinician, and author. He teaches weekly live lessons on Drumeo.com. You can find his book, *Boom!!*, as well as information on how to sign up for private lessons, at aaronedgardrum.com.

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Conquering Life's Stage Fright

Part 1: The Three C's

by Mark Schulman

Imagine you've worked on your skillset for many hours throughout your life and you've developed what you perceive to be an accurate awareness of your abilities. Imagine having spent most waking hours since the age of five thinking about or listening to music. Imagine that your obsession with music has transformed into a tenacity that inspires you to stop at nothing to get your family to support you and buy you your first drumset at age nine.

Imagine many joyful and challenging hours developing your craft to the point where you can play in a band with other young musicians. Imagine playing professional gigs throughout your high school and college years, refining your skillset, and keeping your eye on the goal of becoming a famous world-class musician.

Then after years of playing in cover bands, original bands, and original bands playing covers to make money, you get the opportunity of a lifetime: to audition for a legendary, world-class band.

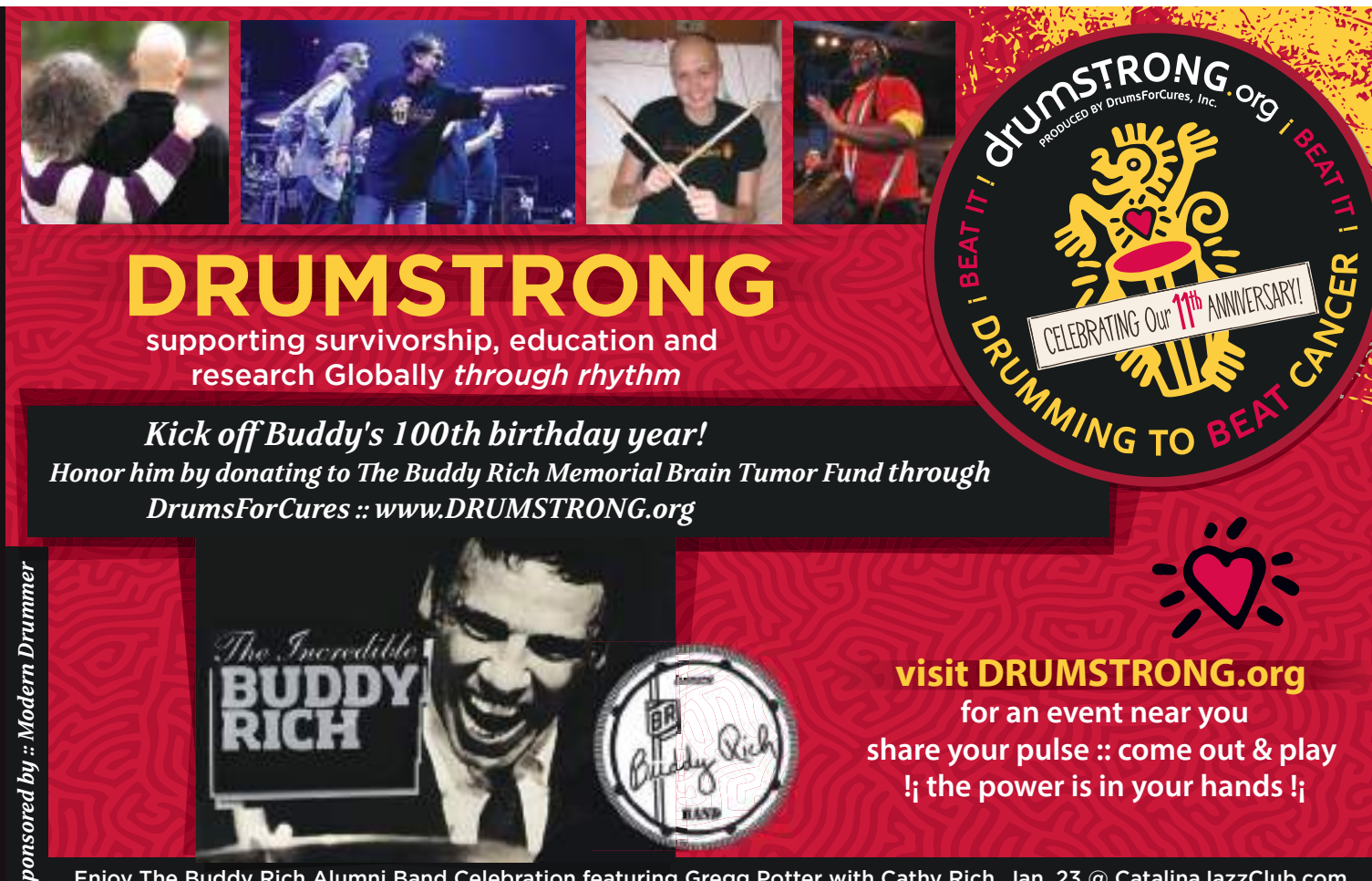
When you're in that defining moment, jamming with this band for the first time, you're so overtaken with stage fright that your heart is beating at a crazy tempo, your mouth is dry, your palms are too sweaty to hold your sticks, and you can't control your internal meter. You feel like you've been pushed out of an airplane without a parachute. And eight minutes later you're told that you can leave, knowing full well that this had been your defining moment—and you blew it.

That story represents my life and career, including my abysmal failure at an audition for Bad English. I imagine that you've also experienced stage fright at some point in your life. Over the course of the next few months, I'm going to give you some advice on how to transform those tenuous moments into confidence.

Three Steps to Top Performance

We're all performers—like William Shakespeare wrote in *As You Like It*: "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players." What I want to share with you is my experience so that you'll have the inspiration, guts, and tools to step up when you're afraid or too intimidated to perform at your best.

Anxiety is an abnormal and overwhelming sense of apprehension and fear often marked by physiological signs like sweating, tension, and increased pulse, doubt concerning the reality and nature of the threat, and self-doubt about one's capacity to cope with it. For most of us, performance anxiety means action anxiety—the fear of doing something. Performance anxiety differs from other fears in that it affects not only cognition (thought) and physiology (body) but also behavior (action). For most people, peak performance doesn't occur from a completely calm state of mind. It comes from a balance between physical provocation and the brain's interpretation



of that excitement.

According to Dr. Andrew Steptoe of University College London, "Performance improves with increasing arousal up to an intermediate level, but deteriorates as arousal rises beyond the optimum." Most people need a certain amount of nervousness or tension to perform at their best. So let's say that performance anxiety is deleterious anxiety—the tipping point when physical manifestations become extreme or when thought processes impede or distort. These physical effects may include heart palpitations or rapid heart rate, muscle weakness and tension, fatigue, nausea, chest pain, shortness of breath, headaches, or stomach aches.

The Three C's

There's a consistent, similar path that applies to how top-class performers surpass anxiety and actualize their goals that can be summarized in three words: clarity, or the ability to identify a goal and determine the skills needed to get there; capability, or becoming proficient in those skills; and confidence, which is the result of success after applying your new skills.

Clarity is the first anxiety buster. I knew before I auditioned for Bad English that I lacked skill in some way. In that case, it was the ability to control my internal sense of time. I wasn't prepared to be in a world-class band. My anxiety was appropriate—I was out of my league. But it wasn't until I knew what I was missing that I could create the mindset to move forward. The moment you clarify your goal and understand where you stand relative to it, you'll know what you need to do. There's no mystery, and that diffuses the anxiety.

Capability comes after gaining the proper knowledge and developing the skills required to achieve your goals. I lacked some fundamentals in the area of meter. The way to develop those fundamentals was to get busy working with a metronome. If you're capable, you're accomplished, talented, proficient, skilled, and able to do a particular thing well. Paramount to reducing fear is having no doubt about your capability. Ask yourself if you can *really* do what you claim you can do. If you're bluffing, then you need to continue developing your capability.

Confidence is the state of being certain. It's the result of clarifying your goal and becoming capable. I'm now completely confident in my ability to control my internal sense of meter, because I focused on it intently in the practice room.

Keep the three C's in mind once you've gained confidence in certain abilities, as they can be applied to other stress-inducing challenges along the way. If an upcoming performance is bringing you anxiety, then take a step back and clarify what you may be missing. Is there a new skill that you need to incorporate? Have the circumstances (such as size of venue) changed, or is there some new component of the performance that you need to address? Have you discovered a new weakness in your abilities that you need to overcome? The three C's are potent and applicable to all stages of learning and development.

The ideas in this article are taken from my book *Conquering Life's Stage Fright: Three Steps to Top Performance*.

Mark Schulman is a first-call drummer for various world-class artists, including Pink, Foreigner, Cher, Billy Idol, Sheryl Crow, and Stevie Nicks. For more information, go to markschulman.com.

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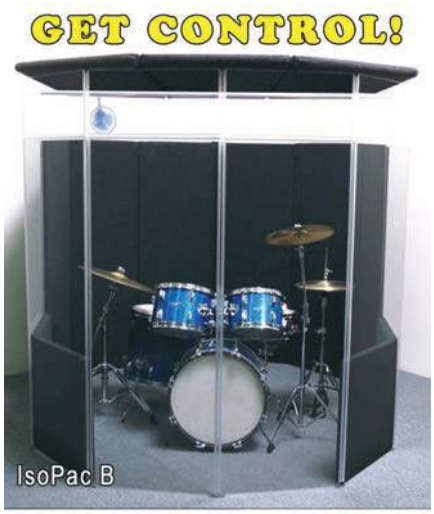

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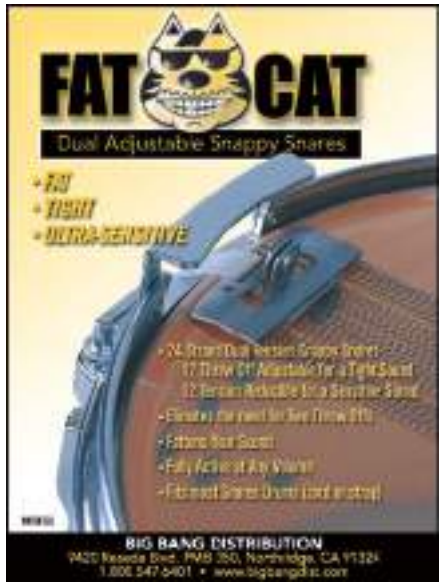

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Beat It Music
Calgary, Alberta

After spending years on the road crisscrossing Canada as a drummer in various bands, then building and running his own restaurant, Calgary, Alberta, native Bob Everett took what he describes as "a gamble" at age sixty, opening Beat It Music in his hometown in 2009. Everett, whose son Shawn is a Grammy-winning producer/mixer/engineer known for his work with the Alabama Shakes, Weezer, and Warpaint, operates the vintage-heavy shop by himself, six days a week, stocking it floor to ceiling with kits dating back to the 1920s and distinctively Canadian tubs from manufacturers like Ayotte and Canwood. He shared his thoughts with *MD* about being Calgary's sole dedicated drum shop.

I started collecting drums when I got off the road. I ended up with a pretty cool collection, maybe eight or ten kits, some stuff from the '20s. And guys would come over and be so blown away with my collection, I started thinking, *It sure would be cool to do a vintage drum shop*. So I ended up stopping by a place that was a drum shop in Calgary for twenty-five years, and it closed. There was a number on the door, so I called the guy and asked him what happened, and I told him I was thinking of opening a vintage shop. And he said, "We want drums back in that building—you gotta do it." Next thing you know, I'm opening a vintage drum shop. My brother and my cousin came up with some bucks to help me get going.

There are three or four bigger music stores [in and around Calgary] that have money and lots of inventory, like Long & McQuade, which is national; there's one guy that does a vintage guitar shop; and there's me. All the bigger shops like what I'm doing, and they send people here. They're supportive. They don't look at me as competition, because I'm flying under the radar with something that's cool.

Calgary was an oil town, a boom town in the early 1900s, right about the time the drumkit came along. There were a lot of vaudeville halls and entertainment trucks here then. So there are some interesting kits still around here. Every once in a while, someone will call me with one of these kits that's been in the family. I had two cases where ninety-year-old people came to me saying, "I'm looking for a home for this kit," and I'd walk out and look in their car and go, "Oh my God…."

What's cool about Calgary for collecting drums is we have a really dry climate. Guys will call me up and they'll have something that's just a jewel. The chrome is perfect on it, the wood—there's no separation, nothing—finishes that look like they're brand new. I ordered a vintage kit from down east, and I was just so depressed. It looked good in the pictures, but when I went to clean it, I took a lug off and all the screws on the back of it snapped off. It was in rough shape. I won't buy from anywhere else because of that.

So many times I think, *Can I keep it going?* This is a tough thing to do. But then I walk in the next morning and open the door and think, *How can I disassemble the coolest vibe and the coolest environment I could ever be in?* It's a struggle probably all the time. You're always moving unique product and giving whatever deal you can to make those deals happen. Sometimes you cry when you do. [laughs] I wish it was more stable. And I know that it would be if I had more money to invest in things that I'm turning down [purchasing].

But the economy got pretty tight, especially in Alberta, in the last year or two because of the oil prices here. That's hurt me. But now I'm starting to pull out of it. I'm seeing that more and more guys are coming back and getting something they've been wanting for months and months. I think the potential is there. I'd hate to think that in our world, the huge music chains are the only thing we're going to have in the future. It takes a guy like me, who's a little old fashioned, loves old stuff, and has the tenacity to hang in there and make something that I think in the long term will become a destination."

Interview by Patrick Berkery

Bob Everett admits he didn't do much due diligence regarding whether opening a drums-only shop in Calgary was a sustainable business model. "I was basing it on my passion—everyone must feel like I do," he says with a laugh. Everett keeps about fifty kits in the store, which comprises a 900-square-foot main floor plus a 900-square-foot basement where he gives lessons and hosts occasional live performances.

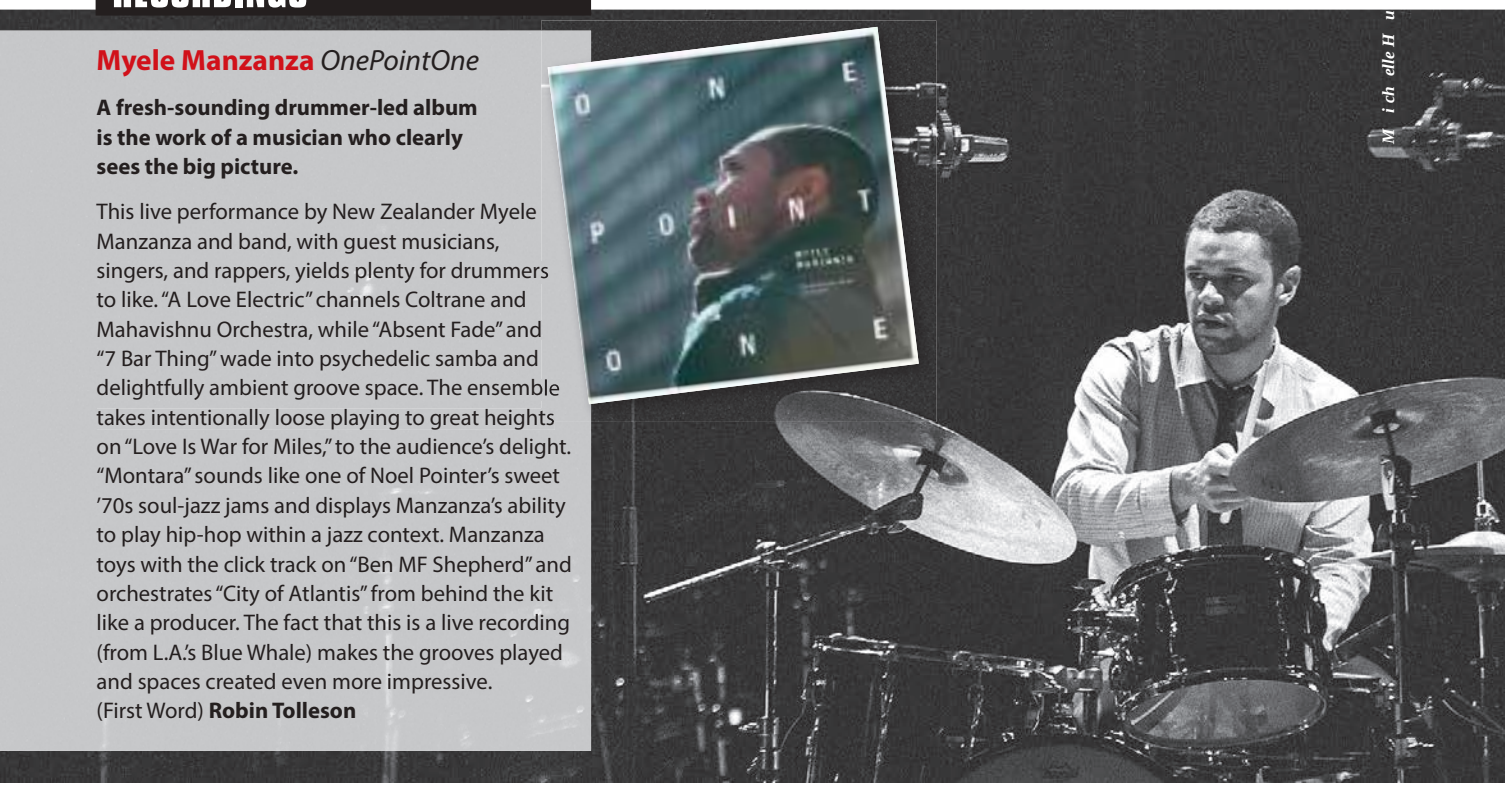
CRITIQUE

RECORDINGS

Myele Manzanza *OnePointOne*

A fresh-sounding drummer-led album is the work of a musician who clearly sees the big picture.

This live performance by New Zealander Myele Manzanza and band, with guest musicians, singers, and rappers, yields plenty for drummers to like. "A Love Electric" channels Coltrane and Mahavishnu Orchestra, while "Absent Fade" and "7 Bar Thing" wade into psychedelic samba and delightfully ambient groove space. The ensemble takes intentionally loose playing to great heights on "Love Is War for Miles," to the audience's delight. "Montara" sounds like one of Noel Pointer's sweet '70s soul-jazz jams and displays Manzanza's ability to play hip-hop within a jazz context. Manzanza toys with the click track on "Ben MF Shepherd" and orchestrates "City of Atlantis" from behind the kit like a producer. The fact that this is a live recording (from L.A.'s Blue Whale) makes the grooves played and spaces created even more impressive. (First Word) **Robin Tolleson**



Aziza *Aziza*
Ricardo Grilli *1954*

A pair of burning releases shine a bright light on the trailblazing drummer ERIC HARLAND.

Aziza, a new group consisting of tenor saxophonist Chris Potter, guitarist Lionel Loueke, bassist Dave Holland, and drummer Eric Harland, shows what happens when some of the greatest names in jazz forget about traditional swing and focus on fire-breathing funk. Every track on this eight-song disc blazes. Harland punctures tricky odd meters, pummels his ride cymbal, attacks the snare drum with a Terminator-like frenzy, and generally scalds the groove like some robo-ballet dancer. Even at high velocity, Harland drums with finesse and finery, and the group-contributed compositions provide a continual showcase for his seemingly effortless skills. (Dare2)

Meanwhile, Harland sounds like he's been playing the material on Ricardo Grilli's *1954* forever, delivering a very musical and tuned-in performance with the New York–based guitarist. The drummer's light rock touch on "Arcturus," with snares off, recalls Brian Blade; he uses a feathery double-time kick to flirt with a brisk tempo on "Pogo56"; and on "Rings" the bass drum is more felt than heard underneath Harland's brushwork. "Radiance" gives Harland a chance to use the full dynamic spectrum, building from a techno-groove four-on-the-floor under a beautiful acoustic piano solo into a chorus of power chords. And Harland's precision is amazing on the ECM-inspired "Far Away Shores," skittering over the long-toned melody. The brief drum solo is breathtaking, but even more impressive is the drummer's ability to react to everything around him while rocketing it all forward. (Tone Rogue) **Ken Micallef** and **Robin Tolleson**

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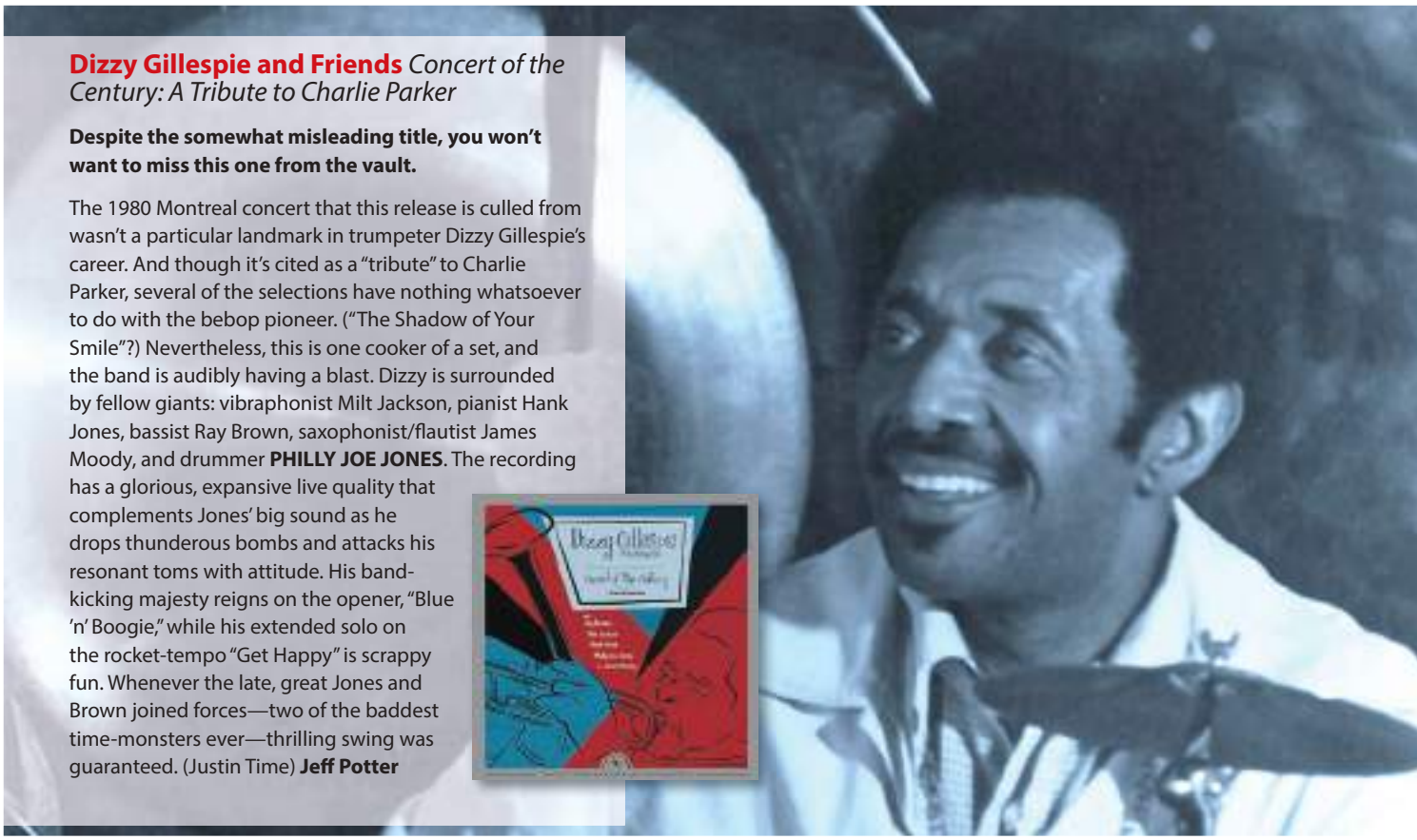

Dizzy Gillespie and Friends *Concert of the Century: A Tribute to Charlie Parker*

Despite the somewhat misleading title, you won't want to miss this one from the vault.

The 1980 Montreal concert that this release is culled from wasn't a particular landmark in trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie's career. And though it's cited as a "tribute" to Charlie Parker, several of the selections have nothing whatsoever to do with the bebop pioneer. ("The Shadow of Your Smile"?) Nevertheless, this is one cooker of a set, and the band is audibly having a blast. Dizzy is surrounded by fellow giants: vibraphonist Milt Jackson, pianist Hank Jones, bassist Ray Brown, saxophonist/flautist James Moody, and drummer **PHILLY JOE JONES**. The recording has a glorious, expansive live quality that complements Jones' big sound as he drops thunderous bombs and attacks his resonant toms with attitude. His band-kicking majesty reigns on the opener, "Blue 'n' Boogie," while his extended solo on the rocket-tempo "Get Happy" is scrappy fun. Whenever the late, great Jones and Brown joined forces—two of the baddest time-monsters ever—thrilling swing was guaranteed. (Justin Time) **Jeff Potter**

Scott Tixier *Cosmic Adventure*

Atypical jazz instrumentation and killer drumming are only part of the excitement here.

With a frontline including violin and harmonica, *Cosmic Adventure* is surely not your standard jazz date, but a sense of deep exploration and expertly performed compositions help place the record squarely into the "must listen" bin. Drummer **JUSTIN BROWN** bursts out of the gate on the bouncy opener, "Maze Walker," driving the band and throwing in big cymbal jabs while swinging extra hard. And check out the hip, propulsive pattern that supports but doesn't overwhelm on "Dig It," with offbeat hats and slick little rimclick flourishes. As the solos move from harmonica to violin to piano, Brown slowly opens up, but he keeps it all cooking on a low simmer with reined-in dynamics. Bassist Luques Curtis plays the glue-man role throughout, allowing Brown to contribute when and where he sees fit, and **PEDRITO MARTINEZ** adds congas to two tracks for yet more rhythmic fun. A pristine recording adds icing to this surprising set. (Sunnyside) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

MULTIMEDIA

Drums for Kids: A Beginner's Guide With Step-by-Step Instruction for Drumset by Scott Schroedl

This concise title is one of the most user-friendly how-tos for beginners to hit the market lately.

In this thirty-two-page method book, author Scott Schroedl puts thoughtful consideration into the tools that a novice of any age needs in developing basic drumset skills. Simple, straightforward descriptions and illustrations of setting up the kit, holding the sticks, and reading drum notation begin the journey. Sections on developing quarter- and 8th-note reading skills on the snare, adding rests, and then building ear training (with the aid of well-recorded online play-along tracks) make it easy to track your progress. Once bass drum training begins, classic rock play-alongs invite the musical aspect of development. Schroedl cleverly introduces each piece of the kit (cymbals, toms, etc.) via well-known tunes that complement each addition until total drumming bliss is achieved. "Less is more" certainly applies to this well-done package. ($13, Hal Leonard) **Mike Haid**

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Rich Redmond's Fourth Annual Nashville Drummer's Weekend

Redmond

Jason Aldean drummer and educator Rich Redmond held his fourth annual Drummer's Weekend in Nashville, Tennessee, this past October. Attendees of all ages and skill levels experienced clinics, master classes, workshops, and performances from a broad range of music industry professionals. This year twenty-five students attended the event. Campers were escorted by limousine to the legendary Nashville rehearsal space Soundcheck, where performances and clinics were held.

Throughout the three-day event students learned from some of today's top players and educators, including Korn's Ray Luzier, Keith Urban's Chris McHugh, studio ace Nir Z, Cyndi Lauper/Joan Jett drummer Sandy Gennaro, educator and Rascal Flatts drummer Jim Riley, Big and Rich's Keio Stroud, percussionist and educator Lalo Davila, Jamie Lynn Spears' Jimmy Elcock, and voiceover artist Jim McCarthy.

Students also partook in a roundtable discussion in which seven Nashville drummers discussed their careers, told stories from the road, and gave advice on how to make it in the industry. This year's panel included Craig Krampf (studio), Chuck Tilley (Alabama, studio), Travis McNabb (Frankie Ballard, Better Than Ezra), Jack White (Rick Springfield), Miles McPherson (Kelly Clarkson, Paramore), Chris Culos (O.A.R.), Troy Luccketta (Tesla), and Sandy Gennaro.

To close the camp, each student learned a song and performed it at Nashville's Douglas Corner Café with a live band of area session musicians. The concert doubled as a benefit event, and $750 was raised for the Breast Cancer Can Stick It! non-profit foundation. Over the past year Redmond has expanded his camp beyond Nashville, with an event in Los Angeles. Camps at other locations are planned for the near future. For more information, go to richredmond.com.

Text by Miguel Monroy
Photos by Brady Hartman

Nir Z

Davila

McHugh

KHS America's Drum Day in Nashville

This past November, Nashville-based percussion manufacturer KHS America invited three powerhouse drummers to town to demonstrate new gear from Mapex, Sonor, and NFUZD Audio during the company's Drum Day event. From the first downbeat, Victor Wooten's Derico Watson, session master and educator Russ Miller, and clinician and chops monster Chris Coleman captivated the audience, which included such notable drummers as Tesla's Troy Luccketta and Jason Aldean's Rich Redmond. "There was no question that I would be here today," Redmond said with a grin.

Watson

Miller

Coleman

Watson began his presentation by talking about his gear before offering advice. "Have fun with what you do, be yourself, and stay in your lane," he said. Derico then explained that he usually focuses on providing the pocket for other musicians before he stretches out. "It just comes down to playing what helps you make the best musical statement," he said. When asked how he develops his solos, Watson said, "I think of melodies of songs or a groove that I like, and I'll improvise from there." He then demonstrated his concepts with an impromptu solo inspired by Queen's "Another One Bites the Dust." Derico ended his presentation with a reminder: "You can't hold your band hostage with your 'hotness.' You have to love the groove."

Russ Miller started his clinic at the front of the stage on a snare with brushes before moving to the drumset. "There's a difference between a great musician who plays drums and a drummer," Miller said. "The goal should be to become great musicians who play drums. It's about rhythm, dynamics, and making sure that you sound good. So often we get lost in the physicality of what we're doing that we forget that we're asking people to listen to us." Miller went on to discuss what it takes to be successful on major recording sessions.

Chris Coleman stressed the importance of communication and empathy toward others. "Look to your right and tell that person not to give up on his or her dreams," Coleman said. "Keep in mind that your bandmates have their own reality. We have to relate to each other. Timing is what locks all of our realities together. Only when our timing is connected can we have the freedom to musically create." To demonstrate, Coleman divided the room into three groups and assigned each group a clapping pattern. He also spoke about the importance of practice. "It's a lifestyle," Chris said. "It's never done."

Miller best summed up the theme of the day. "Communication, delivery, expression, and trying to make good music," he said. "It's inside of that framework that great drumming can happen."

Story and photos by Sayre Berman

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KIT OF THE MONTH

The Eliminator

When searching for the inspiration to build this month's featured kit, Travis Wenzel of Elk Mound, Wisconsin, looked no further than his band's rehearsal space. "This project started out as a 125th-anniversary Sonor Force 2001 drumset," Wenzel says. "At the time my band was practicing in my bass player's garage, where he worked on building custom hot-rod cars as a hobby. The idea sunk in to create a drumkit in the style of a hot rod."

Wenzel based the visual components of the set on the car that appears on the cover of ZZ Top's diamond-certified eighth studio album, *Eliminator*. And the drummer used vintage-style vehicle parts to get the look just right.

"The front grill and radiator shroud are aftermarket pieces meant for a 1932 Ford, and they mount on a microphone stand," Wenzel explains. "The headlights are also 1930s-style aftermarket pieces, and they have working low- and high-beam bulbs. I run a small fog machine behind the grill to give the illusion of a car overheating or burning out. For the tires and wheels, I worked with drumart.com to come up with custom bass drum heads to complete the look."

Drummers holding down the driver's seat behind this setup should certainly have no problem making their band roar.

Photo Submission: Hi-res digital photos, along with descriptive text, may be emailed to kitofthemonth@moderndrummer.com. Show "Kit of the Month" in the subject line.

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